Welder Dies in Tanker Trailer



A 37-year-old welder died when an explosion occurred in the tanker trailer where he was working.

The victim, a welding contractor who worked for a trucking company, had been asked to repair the bulkhead of a petroleum tanker trailer.

How it happened

According to co-workers, the tanker trailer had been “blown out” (a process used to rid tankers of excess petroleum vapors) several days prior to the incident. It is not known whether the victim had performed any air sampling before beginning work on the day of the incident. An explosion occurred shortly after the victim began welding. The victim’s employee, who was on top of the tanker at the time, left the scene shortly after the incident occurred. Police were the first to arrive. One officer went inside the tanker trailer to check on the victim. He reported the welder had been killed during the explosion. The victim was not removed from the tanker trailer until approximately seven hours after the incident because the fire department was concerned about another potential explosion.

The investigation concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Maintain a written injury and illness prevention program.
- Initiate a comprehensive enforcement and safety review program for confined space entry procedures.
- Expand confined space policies to address hazards due to oxygen deficient, flammable/explosive or toxic environments.