

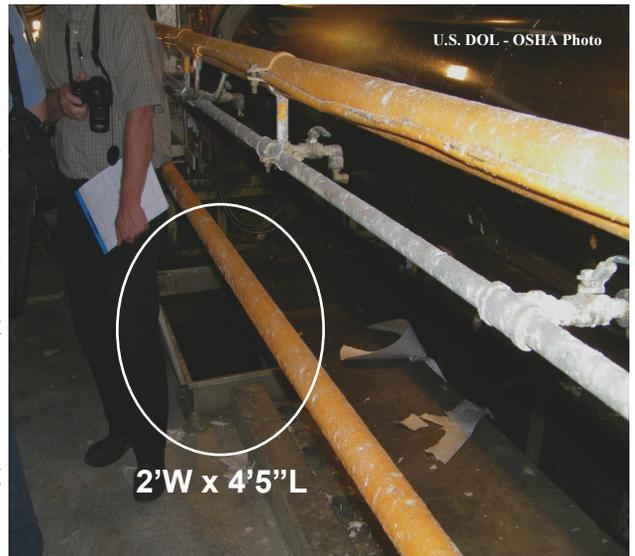


HAZARD ALERT

Fatal Accident Involving Fall and Engulfment Hazards

A USW member was fatally injured in a paper mill after falling through an unguarded “thread-up tail chute” floor opening at the dry-stack calender rolls of a paper making machine. A sheet break resulted in paper wrapping around the third auxiliary roll of the dry-stack calender rolls. This required the crew to cut the wrapped paper from the roller with their hand knives. While the victim was in the act of cutting paper (with his hand stretched above his head) he fell through the unguarded floor opening. He landed on a large moving conveyor belt which then dropped him inside a hydropulper tank where he was engulfed in hot water, waste paper and slurry.

The chute opening had been cut into the floor years earlier to simplify clean-up and included a removable railing. It also had a hinged cover, but it had been tied open sometime afterwards because vibration would rattle it closed. Over time, working around the unguarded hazard became normalized. The employer’s safety manager blamed the victim for not “keeping his eyes on path” as the mill’s behavioral safety program had emphasized this phrase. The crew had also been experiencing speed-up and downsizing which combined jobs creating additional workplace hazards.



Recommendations to Prevent Recurrence:

- Eliminate (where possible) floor holes/openings that workers can fall into.
- Guard every floor hole/opening that workers can fall into by use of a standard railing/toeboard or a suitable cover. If a cover is used it must be suitable for the environment (i.e. vibration, dampness, strength, secured or hinged) and user friendly. If applicable, consider raising the base of a chute and cover, or alter the size so it does not pose a hazard or use grating.
- Provide a standard railing/toeboard around every open-sided floor, platform, or runway where workers could be injured in a fall.
- Regardless of height, if workers can fall into or onto dangerous machines, vats or equipment, standard railings/toeboards must be provided.
- For certain jobs/tasks, other means of fall protection or personal-fall-arrest-systems may be required (such as, safety nets, a safety harness and lanyard with proper anchor points).
- Use ‘Management of Change’ procedures to identify, eliminate and/or control hazards.
- Ensure that an effective health & safety committee is in place that meets frequently; investigates incidents for root causes/systems failure; address work organization hazards and make recommendations and follow-up to ensure implementation. The committee must also conduct frequent inspections of the workplace to find and fix hazards.



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This hazard alert is based on an actual incident, and reflects our best understanding of the incident at the time it was written. However, many incidents have multiple causes; this alert may not cover all of them. The purpose of the alert is to illustrate workplace hazards; it is not intended to be a comprehensive report on the incident.