

CASE 1. Millwright died after falling 30 feet through an unguarded 60-inch air duct in a dust collection plenum.

On March 7, 2002, a 41-year old millwright died when he fell 30 feet through an unguarded 60-inch air duct in a dust collection plenum. He and another millwright were performing routine maintenance on the dust collection system looking for leaking filter bags. To check for leaks, a fluorescent powder is put into the exhaust system through one of the intake ducts. Using a "black" ultraviolet light, the millwright enters the plenum at night to check for any leaking powder; the leaking powder will glow under the light, indicating that the bag must be replaced. The victim locked out the dust collector and climbed a vertical caged ladder to the dust collector access doors and stood on the outside platform. The black light in addition to another light had been tied to a rope and the victim pulled the lights up to himself. While checking for leaks he fell through the unguarded wall opening. His coworker heard a loud noise and called out to the victim. When he did not reply, his coworker went to investigate. He climbed the ladder to the access platform and shined a flashlight inside the collector. He noticed the electrical cord running down the air duct. The coworker entered the plenum and shined the flashlight down the air duct to check if he could see his coworker. The coworker left the collector, and with fellow employees, called for emergency response and tools to remove the air duct access door near ground level. The victim died of positional asphyxiation.

MIOSHA issued the following serious citations to the employer:

1. The wall opening was not guarded with a standard barrier or wall opening screen where there is more than a 4 foot drop and the bottom of the opening is less than 3 feet above standing level. (Floor and Wall Openings, Stairways & Skylights, Part 2, Rule 217(3)).
2. An inadequate assessment of the workplace occurred to determine in any spaces are permit-required confined spaces. (Confined Space Entry, Part 90, Rule 1910.146(c)(1) Adopted by Rule 9002)
3. The employer provided inadequate employee training so that all employees whose work is regulated by the permit-required confined space standard acquires the understanding, knowledge and skills necessary for the safe performance of their assigned duties. (Confined Space Entry, Part 90, Rule 1910.146(g)(1) Adopted by Rule 9002)