

Case 55. 37-year old female furnace operator died when she was crushed between the substructure of a lift platform and the floor.

On Saturday, March 27, 2004, a 37-year-old female furnace operator died when she was crushed between the substructure of a lift platform and the floor. The substructure supported the dump platform at a height of about 80 inches from the floor. The substructure and platform would rise to allow parts to be dumped, and then lowered. The dump station cycle including the rising, dumping, and lowering was between 3-1/2 to 4-1/2 minutes from the time two actuating buttons were initiated. The cycle was automatic, as the buttons did not require constant pressure. Because the substructure supporting the platform created exposed pinch points during the automated dumping, a metal mesh guarding originally secured with nuts and screws was placed around it. The mesh guarding surrounding the victim's station had been damaged by a forklift truck and was attached only at the top with nylon wire ties. She entered the area under the substructure while the dump station was in operation to retrieve three metal parts by lifting the mesh guarding from the floor. The parts had fallen either from the loaded parts bin, the lift platform, or during the dumping operation. She was trapped and crushed by the substructure on its downward cycle before she could get back out. The cause of death was blunt trauma, multiple injuries.

MIOSHA issued the following Serious citation to the employer.

Serious:

GENERAL PROVISIONS, PART, 1, RULE 34(9)

Guard pinch point or otherwise protect the employee exposed to contact.

There were inadequate guards for exposed pinch points on the furnace automated parts dumping station.

MIOSHA issued the following recommendation to the company.

Develop, document and utilize a cleanout procedure for removing loose or dislodged parts from under the automated lift systems. The procedures should include the use of long handled tools with hooks or magnets to retrieve the parts to prevent employees from having any part of their bodies under the lift systems during the cleanout process. The affected employees should be trained in these procedures.