

Case 241. 18-year-old Hispanic male farm hand and a 17-year-old Hispanic male farm hand were asphyxiated in a 3,000 gallon polyethylene feed tank.

An 18-year-old Hispanic male farm hand and a 17-year-old Hispanic male farm hand were asphyxiated in a 3,000 gallon polyethylene feed tank. The tank dimensions were 90 inches wide by 120 inches high with a 16- inch inside diameter tank opening located at the top of the tank. The tank contained six to eight inches of feed material that had fermented resulting in a non-respirable atmosphere. Approximately one to two weeks prior to the incident, the tank lid was removed. On the day of the incident, the two workers power washed another feed tank. They were observed inside this tank three times and, through interview statements, were told to exit the tank. Later that day, the workers had been observed power washing the outside of the incident tank. One of the workers placed a ladder outside of the tank and another ladder into the tank through the tank opening. The ladder did not reach to the bottom of the tank. It is unclear why the decedents entered the tank. A coworker noted the power washer was running but did not see the decedents. He climbed a ladder located outside the tank and looked through the tank opening. Seeing both decedents inside the tank, the coworker ran for help. Emergency response arrived and it was decided to use a forklift to tip the tank to its side to recover the decedents.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citations at the conclusion of its investigation.

SERIOUS:MICHIGAN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT, ACT 154, P.A.. 1974, as amended, section 11(a)

The employer did not furnish to each employee, employment and a place of employment, which was free from recognized hazards that were causing or were likely to cause death or serious physical harm to the employees:

Employees were exposed to confined space hazards while cleaning liquid feed tanks. Two employees died when they were exposed to a non-respirable atmosphere when they entered a 3,000-gallon polyethylene tank, containing 6-inches to 8-inches of a liquid dairy cattle feed supplement, which had been sitting for 5 to 6 months.

Among other methods, one feasible and acceptable method to correct this violation is to implement a confined space program including a survey of spaces, hazard identification and evaluation, a written program, mechanical ventilation, training, atmospheric testing, and emergency rescue procedures and services.

SERIOUS: HAZARD COMMUNICATION, PART 430, 1910.1200(e)(1)

A written hazard communication program was not developed, implemented, and/or maintained at the workplace which describes how the criteria specified in 1910.1200(f), (g), and (h) will be met:

The following deficiencies were noted:

No written program and no, or inadequate, employee training provided.