

FATAL ALERT

January 5, 2009

A driller working for an oil and gas drilling company was fatally injured while working a night tower shift on the drilling deck. The injury occurred when the driller sustained massive trauma to the upper, back portion of the top of the head. The driller and his drilling crew were performing “rig-up/rig-down” procedures and had just completed a “rig skid” prior to the accident. The accident was not witnessed, but shortly after the incident occurred, a member of the drilling crew found the driller in the driller’s shack. The crew member stated that he found the driller, awake and able to speak, in the driller’s shack bleeding from the head, and was taken to the rig manager’s trailer. Upon arrival of the drilling superintendent at the rig location, the driller was transported by company vehicle to the medical clinic. The injured driller was medically life-flighted to a regional care facility and died due to the injuries several days later. Due to the amount of force absorbed, the employee died from massive head trauma sustained at the rig location. The location and amount of force leads the investigation to the belief that either a fall from an unknown height or a strike by a swinging or overhead object could be the cause of the accident. The drilling deck floor had ice buildup on the walking/working surface and an unguarded floor opening, caused by the removal of a 9” X 2’-3’ plate section of the drilling deck floor, was documented in the investigation.

The employee was an experienced driller in the oil and gas industry and had many years in the oil and gas extraction/drilling business.

Significant Factors:

The employee was working as a driller on an oil and gas drilling rig.

The accident was not witnessed by any of the other crew members, as the employee was alone at the time of the accident; even though the entire drilling crew was within the boundaries and work stations of the rig site

The employee sustained an injury to the head either from a fall from an unknown height or was subject to an unknown falling or swinging object.

The investigation was able to determine that the employee was exposed to massive head trauma and within days after the injury, died as a result.

Recommendations:

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Brief/retrain all employees on the dangers of working around oil and gas drilling equipment, dangers of working at heights, overhead falling objects hazards, and slippery walking/working surfaces that can injure employees.
- Train/retrain all employees to recognize and avoid unsafe work locations when working around oil and gas drilling equipment.
- Recommend that all employees working around oil and gas drilling equipment have additional training in hazard recognition and safe working locations.