

FATAL ALERT

March 20, 2007

A crew with numerous years of experience working at overhauling power plant furnace units was in the process of removing crouton slope tubes when a section of the throat scaffold failed and allowed a worker who was standing on the throat scaffold to fall into the drag chain area at the bottom of the furnace. The night crew foreman had advised the day crew foremen of the need to move a throat scaffold support before a section of crouton slope tubes could be removed. The crouton slope tubes were supporting a section of the throat scaffold. The day crew foreman accomplished a Job Safety Analysis meeting at the beginning of the work day, the morning of the accident, but made no mention of the potential hazard associated the scaffold support.

The company had rules relating to inspecting scaffolding prior to use and tagging the scaffold as to its condition and documenting work restrictions as needed. No inspection tags were placed on the scaffold and no employee identified the lack of an inspection tag.

Later in the morning the day crew foreman, stopped and warned a worker about the potential hazard and what needed to be done before the crouton slope tubes could be removed. After the foreman left the area, the worker continued to remove the section of crouton slope tubes that were supporting the throat scaffold. The co-worker helping him was standing on the throat scaffold and as the crouton slope tubes were removed the scaffold support became dislodged and the scaffold failed allowing the worker to fall to the bottom of the furnace into the drag chain area.

Significant Factors:

- The night and day crew foremen failed to document restrictions associated with the throat scaffold on a scaffold inspection tag.
- The day crew foremen failed to communicate the scaffold hazard during a JSA meeting held the morning of the accident.
- Experienced employees failed to ensure the scaffold supports were not going to be affected by their actions.
- The employer failed to enforce scaffold inspection tagging.
- Employees fail to following training instruction relating to scaffold inspection tagging.
- An employee apparently ignored warnings and instruction given by the foreman and proceeded to remove the crouton slope tubes that were supporting the throat scaffold a co-worker was standing on at the time of the accident
- As the crouton slope tubes were removed the throat scaffold support became dislodged and caused the scaffold to fail, allowing the scaffold and the employee to fall into the drag chain area of the furnace.

Recommendations:

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Ensure the Wyoming OSHA rules relating to scaffolds are enforced.
- Ensure that scaffolding used is properly designed and installed, and inspected.
- Ensure scaffold inspections tags are placed on scaffold if they are called for in your procedures.