

Fatal Alert

On June 5, 2018, employee 1 and employee 2 were cleaning built up sediment from the water recycling system located on a dairy farm. The job was a routine function. The employees were working inside and outside of a pit that was approximately 10 feet from the surface to the footer, with a ladder used for egress. There was a small amount of water flowing into the pit due to the head gate having an obstruction preventing it from completely closing. A submersible pump used to remove water from the pit had a broken chain that lifted/lowered the pump.

Employee 1 worked with the employer outside of the pit to get the submersible pump to function. Employee 2 continued to work outside, a distance away from the building.

After the employer started the pump, employee 1 went back into the pit and attempted to hook a new chain to the pump. At this time, he collapsed in the pit due to the hazardous atmosphere.

The employer attempted rescue but was almost overcome with the same hazardous atmosphere. A contractor on site helped recover the employer with the help of a second contractor.

The employer and contractors were taken to the local hospital and treated, while Employee 1 was retrieved from the pit by the local fire department and pronounced dead on the scene.

Significant factors

- The employees, employer, and contractors were not trained in confined space entry.
- The employees did not have gas monitors.
- The employees, employer, and contractors were not trained in emergency rescue.

Recommendations

- The employer should evaluate the need for confined space entry policies, procedures, and training.
- The employer should reevaluate their hazard assessment for this job duty and determine necessary PPE or another form of hazard control.