

Fatal Alert

On April 21, 2021, two employees were working inside a rail tank car that had previously contained pressurized propane. The two employees were conducting ultrasonic testing on the welds of the interior of the tank car. Employee one exited the tank manway and expressed concern that he was starting to smell something. Employee three, the attendant, immediately told employee one that he and employee two should exit the tank. As employee one went down the ladder to inform employee two to exit an explosion inside the tank car occurred.

Significant Factors

- At the time of the incident, the entry space atmosphere was not being monitored for oxygen content, flammable gases, or toxic air contaminants.
- One entrant and the attendant had no training in Confined Space entry operations.
- The attendant was performing other duties away from the entry point of the space.
- No rescue equipment or rescue service was available on-site at the time of the incident.

Recommendations

- The employer should reevaluate their ability to perform confined space work. If after that evaluation they determine they are able to perform the work, the employer should purchase necessary rescue equipment and retain a rescue service for rescue.
- The employer should ensure that employees who are assigned Confined Space entry roles are trained in the specific roles they will be assigned.
- The employer should ensure that they are following their internal Confined Space Entry Program.