Battery Handling Safety Fatality File

A 68-year-old boat repairman died from burn injuries he received from a battery explosion and fire. The CA/FACE investigator learned of this incident on May 29, 2007, through a facsimile from the Santa Ana District Office of the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA). Contact with the victim's employer was made on June 4, 2007. On June 7, 2007, the CA/FACE investigator traveled to the company that employed the victim and interviewed the company's owner and other employees in the shop. Photographs of the incident scene were taken.

The employer of the victim was a small service, maintenance, and sales shop of trailed boats. The company had been in business for over 20 years and had two employees.

The victim had worked for the company for about two and one half years as a private contractor. He only worked when needed. The victim had a key to the shop and came and went as he desired.

The company did not have a safety program or an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP). The company did not have a training program that provided safety training to employees. The victim was experienced in boat maintenance and repair. According to the company owner, the victim had been a technical representative for a major outboard motor manufacturer in Florida for many years and taught boating safety classes.

Investigation

The site of the incident was a maintenance and service shop for trailed boats. On the day of the incident the victim went to the shop and let himself in with his own key. The victim placed a marine battery on the floor of the shop near a battery charger and a customer's boat. The victim was attempting to attach a battery charger to a marine battery when the battery exploded. The explosion caught the customer's boat and the victim on fire. The victim attempted to put the fire out on the boat even though he was on fire himself. Passersby saw the fire and called 911. The paramedics and fire department arrived and treated the victim, then transported him to a local hospital where he died from his injuries.

Cause of Death

The cause of death according to the death certificate was thermal burns.