

The Aging Workforce Fatality File



Business owner speaks out after 62-year-old employee's workplace death

The owner of a Lucan farm-equipment manufacturer is expressing shock and sadness over a 62-year-old employee's workplace death – which he believes may be attributed to natural causes – as Ontario's Labour Ministry investigates.

It was about 9:30 a.m. Monday when paramedics were called to OJB Industries Inc. on Breen Drive in Lucan, north of London. Police say one person was pronounced dead at the scene – an employee who'd worked there five years, owner Otto Bloemen, who found the fallen worker, said Tuesday.

"We're shocked," said Bloemen, whose business designs and manufactures equipment for the dairy industry. "We found (him) dead on the floor. We tried everything. I was the one who did CPR."

Bloemen said his employee, whose name has not been made public, was unresponsive. He cautioned people to wait until the ministry's mandatory probe is complete but said, "as far as we know, we think it's a natural death."

Police have said the incident "was non-suspicious" and the matter "has been handed over to the Ministry of Labour," which probes workplace injuries and deaths provincewide, a Middlesex OPP spokesperson said.

Labour Ministry officials were seen at OJB Industries Monday. Two investigators have been assigned to the case.

Bloemen, who has run the Lucan business for 12 years, described the pain and shock of his employee's death in a phone interview Tuesday.

"We've never had an accident so far," he said. "It's a sad thing that someone passes away that early."

This is believed to be the first local workplace death since September 2021, when a Putnam man died after being pinned under a large steel box at a business in South-West Oxford Township, east of London, police said at the time. He was identified as William Beacham, 21.