

Watchman Buried in Sawdust Collapse



A watchman at a manufacturing facility was suffocated when a 30-foot pile of sawdust collapsed on him.

The sawdust was being used to fuel a wood-fired boiler furnace. The watchman had entered a large holding bin containing the sawdust to help the boiler operator, because the sawdust was caked and not feeding into the furnace properly. While they were trying to free the sawdust, it collapsed and the watchman was buried.

He was unconscious when extricated from the sawdust. Attempts to revive him in the ambulance and at the hospital were not successful.

The workers were not wearing safety equipment nor following the posted safety rules.

When doing a job such as this, the worker in the bin should have been wearing a safety harness and lifeline under the control of a fellow worker watching from outside the bin. A mechanical means of loosening the sawdust would have eliminated the need for workers to enter the bin. Continuing safety training and review of safety procedures should have been mandatory for every employee of the boiler room.