

# Working Alone: Isolation, Emergency Response and Check-In Systems Fatality File



## Worker Found Deceased Inside Water Tank of a Steam Truck (Alberta, Canada – February 19, 2022)

### Summary of Incident

On February 19, 2022, a worker in Alberta's mining and petroleum development sector was found deceased inside the water supply tank of a steam truck. The worker had been performing maintenance or inspection-related duties alone. Because no coworker was present and no working check-in system was in place at the moment of the incident, the worker's absence was not detected in time to attempt a rescue.

### Investigation

Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) opened a worksite fatality investigation under file F-OHS-269391. The investigation examined hazard assessment, working-alone procedures, confined-space entry controls, and emergency response. The case was referred for enforcement action review to determine prosecution under Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Act.

### Key Hazards Demonstrated by the Incident

The case reflects three patterns NIOSH and Canadian OHS regulators repeatedly cite in lone-worker fatalities. First, confined-space entry alone – even briefly – leaves no one available to recognize distress, sound an alarm, or perform rescue. Second, the absence of a verified two-way check-in system delayed discovery beyond the survival window. Third, lone-worker hazard assessments in remote and resource-sector sites often underestimate the time required for emergency response to reach the location.

### Takeaways

Never enter a confined space alone, regardless of how routine the task feels. Establish a check-in schedule with verified two-way confirmation and a documented escalation procedure if a check-in is missed. Conduct a written hazard assessment for every lone-worker task and update it whenever conditions change. Equip lone workers with a reliable communication device, backup power, and a panic/SOS function appropriate to the site.

**Sources:** <https://open.alberta.ca>