Automated Palletizer Crushes Worker

A worker died after being crushed by a palletizer lift. The automated equipment fills pallets with cases of soft drinks.

The victim was remotely monitoring the palletizer when the equipment stopped itself. Something apparently blocked a light-beam sensor. The victim left the palletizer in automatic mode while he removed safety chains and climbed over pallet conveyors to an area under the lift. He removed a ball of cellophane. With the beam no longer blocked, the palletizer jumped to its lowest position, trapping the victim. A forklift driver found him and called for emergency response to remove the victim, who was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.

Afterward, the company replaced the chains with another interlocking safety gate. The palletizer now shuts off when someone enters the restricted area.

Safety investigators recommended a system of interlocking safety doors or gates to separate workers from hazardous production areas. These devices should shut down the hazardous equipment when gates are opened.

Does your crew know how to shut down equipment before entering restricted areas? The emergency stop device should prevent restart until the worker activates a restart device located outside the restricted area.