Company Allegedly Didn’t Follow Manufacturer’s Procedures

Deviating from standard machinery operating procedures is always a gamble. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) alleges that failure to follow procedures contributed to a worker’s death at a plastics company in Sarepta, LA.

Employee Colota Gates, 27, was loading raw material onto a compression molding press when it lowered and fatally struck her on the head. OSHA initiated an investigation into Gates’ death in late June, 2006. As a result, Continental Structural Plastics Louisiana LLC has been cited for willful failure to protect employees against being crushed while operating a hydraulic power press. It also has been cited for a serious violation alleging failure to anchor the palm button control station (responsible for operating the hydraulic power press) to the floor to prevent the unintended tripping or cycling of the press.

“The company’s failure to follow the hydraulic press manufacturer’s standard operating procedures contributed to the worker’s death,” said Greg Honaker, area director of OSHA’s Baton Rouge area office. “Complying with OSHA’s standard for machine guarding could have prevented this fatality.”

Continental Structural is facing $67,500 in proposed penalties. The company, which manufactures structural plastic components for the automobile and other industries, employs about 240 workers at its facility.