Computer Technician Crushed in Trash Compactor

A computer technician who was looking for a box was killed when he leaned into a trash compactor.

The victim started the compactor, then leaned through the open loading door while the ram was paused at the top of its stroke. He had his head and shoulders inside the unit when the ram came down. He died of crushing injuries to his chest, abdomen and back.

The compactor’s start switch key should have been in the custody of an authorized operator who was familiar with the system. Evidence suggests the computer technician did not recognize the hazard of entering the compactor without first turning it off. The ram had stopped at the top of the cycle, and he might have thought no further movement would take place. Workers must recognize the hazard of entering a dangerous situation and the need for authorized operation.

Even operators who are familiar with the operation should follow a lockout procedure to ensure a machine will not start accidentally.

Machines must be properly inspected to make sure safety measures are working properly. In this case, the access door had an interlock switch to prevent operation while open, but it was not working. Warning signs had been painted over.