Drill Press Strangles Operator

A man was strangled after his shirt-sleeve was caught by the rotating drill bit of a drill press he was operating.

The victim was drilling holes into steel plates at a foundry. The task was not one of the man’s regular jobs. Evidence indicated that while he was clamping a metal plate to the drill press table, the drill bit caught the victim’s sleeve and tightened around his neck.

It was estimated the victim had been caught in the press for more than an hour before co-workers found him.

Investigators concluded that, in order to prevent similar incidents, employers should:

- Guard moving machine parts to prevent the operator from having any part of his body in the danger zone during the operating cycle. If machinery is older and not equipped with guards, the manufacturer can recommend appropriate guards available.
- Instruct employees to have the drill spindle engaged only when ready to start drilling, not while setting up work clamps.
- Ensure drill presses and similar equipment have emergency stops and switches accessible from the operating position.
- Develop, implement and enforce a safety program that includes training on all equipment even if infrequently used.