Fuel Tank Falls On Worker

A large diesel fuel tank fell on a worker who was helping move it into place. The tank measured six feet in diameter by nearly 20 feet in length. It weighed 3,000 pounds when empty and was three-quarters full of fuel.

The tank was suspended in a cradle and was being lifted by two mobile cranes. The plan was to place it on a flatdeck truck. The victim was standing beside the tank, waiting to remove the cradle. When the tank was about a foot above the deck, one of the crane operators got out of the crane and came over to remove the supporting cradle. The victim was helping to remove the cradle at the other end of the tank but was having difficulty. The second crane operator got out of the crane to help him. At this point, the second crane tipped over, which brought the tank down on the victim. He was killed instantly.

Many factors contributed to this incident. Both of the crane operators were inexperienced. The cranes were overloaded. The weight and amount of fuel were not calculated, nor were load charts available. The tank did not contain the baffles – devices to control shifting of liquid – necessary for safe hoisting of a liquid load. The operators left the controls of the cranes. A qualified supervisor was not in attendance to direct the dual crane lift operation.