HazCom in Confined Spaces Fatality File

Employee dies from asphyxiation after entering fuel tank

In 2023, a fatal incident occurred at a U.S. industrial facility when a worker entered a confined space—a fuel tank—without proper hazard communication or safety controls. The space lacked adequate ventilation, and the atmosphere inside contained hazardous vapors. The employee, unaware of the oxygen-deficient conditions, collapsed shortly after entry and could not be revived by rescue personnel.

According to the OSHA investigation, the employer failed to properly label the confined space, provide Safety Data Sheets (SDS) regarding the chemicals involved, or train the worker in safe confined space entry procedures. In addition, no permit system or atmospheric testing had been conducted prior to entry, and no standby attendant was present.

This tragedy highlights the vital importance of strict adherence to Hazard Communication (HAZCOM) protocols and confined space safety regulations. Employers must ensure that all workers are trained to recognize chemical hazards, understand the use of SDS, and follow permit-required confined space entry procedures. Failure to do so can—and does—lead to preventable fatalities.

Source: *Osha.gov*