Human Performance Fatality File

After one 14-hour shift, being “worked to death” took on a whole different meaning for Robert Dietz and his family. Dietz worked for the Lower Bucks County Joint Municipal Authority in Pennsylvania. He put in over 20 years of service as a maintenance worker. Even with his higher status, Dietz found himself regularly working long hours doing manual labor: jack-hammering, repairing water main breaks, cutting tree roots.

Nearing the end of an especially grueling day, Dietz collapsed. First responders could not resuscitate him. Shortly after, he was pronounced dead.

Some doctors explained that Dietz’s pre-existing conditions put him at high risk for a heart attack, while others stated his conditions paired with extraneous physical labor caused his death.

The workers comp judge agreed with the latter.

Despite the outcome of the workers’ comp claim filed by Dietz’s widow, it’s important to see how fatigue and individual worker health plays a huge role in worker safety. Dietz’s fatal heart attack may have been prevented had Dietz’s employer been more invested in work/life balance and wellness.