Ink Spill On The Floor Results In A Fiery Death

A storage tank with approximately 200 gallons of combustible ink was accidentally damaged while it was being moved, causing a leak. A considerable amount of liquid had spilled onto the floor before it was noticed.

The workers attempted to stop the leak and clean it up by using shovels, cardboard and mops. A forklift truck was used during an attempt to turn the storage container so that the damaged valve could be closed off. However, the forklift could not gain any traction since it was in the middle of the spill. The operator used various methods in attempting to gain enough traction, including a constant rapid forward and reversing of the motor relay, thus causing excessive sparking in the relay compartment of the forklift truck, resulting in a flash fire.

The operator of the forklift truck sustained extensive burns in the fire and subsequently died. The cause of death was determined as hypovolemic shock due to full thickness thermal burns to at least 90 percent of his body.

What procedures does your company have regarding spills, or the storage and handling of volatile materials? Is everyone aware of what those materials are? What about fire awareness, prevention and training? If you were in this predicament what would you have done?

An unfortunate death like this one could have been prevented. The coroner’s report on this death commented on the lack of safety training that this firm gave its employees. It is likely that if these topics were covered on a regular basis at safety meetings and training sessions this worker wouldn’t have died.