It Won’t Happen to Me Fatality File

There’s a hazard in every workplace that is deadly. It doesn’t matter where you work or what type of work you do. It rides with you on your way to work. It even follows you home.

To illustrate how not being mentally present can lead to tragedy, lead operator (and Butch’s mother) Sandy, Sandy’s friend and supervisor Reine and Butch’s best friend Chuck discuss Sandy’s devotion to safety, the day Butch died at work and the lessons we can all learn about complacency from Butch’s death.

Sandy says she has worked on her job for nearly 50 years and that even more than being a lead operator, her job is keeping people safe.

Sandy explains that you can’t become complacent because a machine can kill or maim you.

Her son, born Andrew, Butch was his nickname, most wonderful son, loving, just an amazing, amazing son.

Butch’s best friend Chuck says he has known Sandy for 32 years and that Butch was basically his brother.

On May 25, Butch went to work as normal on second shift, but had to go in for a safety meeting.

He left the meeting to go do his job that he had done for two years. The same job, nothing, nothing different, but this day was different. This day was entirely different. Thirty minutes after he went to work, he was dead, crushed to death in a machine.

Butch went to work on a piece of equipment that was not properly tagged out. He went up on top of the piece of equipment and it had some type of lever that crushed him to his death.

What is ironic is that the safety meeting Butch had just left was on lockout/tagout.

Butch had a beautiful wife and a six-year-old daughter that he will never see grow up. “Just realize the dangers. People don’t think they can die at work, but they can.”

“From all bad things that happen, we know there’s good and I think Sandy’s passion to tell this story is how she’s making Butch live on,” Reine adds. She says that hopefully Butch will be living on for many years by letting people know he was wonderful man and father and hopes that they will do the right thing to lead longer lives.

“I think I’m pretty much a firm believer that there is no such thing as an accident. There was no reason for my son to die that day. There was no reason for my son to die. I never, ever, want another family to have to go through what we went through. If there’s any way, anything I could say to prevent it and help another family, then this has been the best thing that I’ve ever done,” Sandy says at the end of the discussion.

Butch had left a safety meeting on the very same danger that took his life.

So, what happened? The answer is simple: Butch was at work, but his mind was somewhere else altogether.

Take a moment and put yourself in Butch’s place. Are you so accustomed to your job that you could do it without really having to think about it? How about your drive home? Do you know the route so well that you can just use that time to daydream?

Now think about your family and friends. Think about them telling the story you just watched—only this time it’s about you.