Laborer Drowns in Flooded Pipeline

Could This Have Been You?

On average, 5,000 to 6,000 workers are killed each year. Learn from the following reports of real workplace fatalities to avoid a similar fate.

A 28-year-old laborer drowned after the pipe he was working in flooded. The victim was grouting joints inside a 27-inch pipeline under construction. A backhoe operator was working a short distance away when he ruptured a water line, releasing 5,000 gallons (19,000 liters) of water into the pipeline. The victim became trapped and drowned.

The investigator concluded that in order to prevent similar occurrences in future, employers should:

- Develop a comprehensive safety program that clearly documents procedures for safe entry into confined spaces.
- Provide lifelines and harnesses, and ensure that workers wear them before entering confined spaces where physical hazards such as drowning are present.
- Position a trained standby person outside of confined spaces when a worker enters or works inside. The standby person should visually monitor the tasks being performed inside and should be able to communicate with the workers in the confined space.
- Not have a backhoe operating near workers in a sub-surface confined space.