Machine Shop Safety Fatality File

Machinist Fatally Injured from Being Pinned in Vertical Lathe

A 61-year-old male machinist (the victim) died after his clothing was caught by a clamp on the revolving turntable of a vertical lathe, and he was pinned against the machine parts. The 64″ diameter turntable held a ring of steel stock secured to the table by six holding clamps. A cutting arm tool on the machine was used to bore the interior of the ring stock, producing metal turnings and filings that accumulated on the turntable and on the floor near the machine. A metal barrier guard shielded about two-thirds of the open side turntable from worker contact and deflected the metal turnings and filings. At the time of the incident, the victim was wearing gloves while standing next to the unguarded section of the turntable. The incident was unwitnessed, but apparently the victim either reached over the revolving table or fell onto it. His glove was caught by a clamp, and his body was pulled against the opening between the lathe housing and the cutting arm. A co-worker heard a sound, saw the victim pinned in the machine, and went to the shop office to call emergency medical services (EMS). A second co-worker went to the machine and turned off the power, stopping the machine. By this time, the victim had fallen back onto the shop floor. EMS responders and police arrived within several minutes. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The FACE investigator concluded that, to prevent similar incidents, employers should:

- ensure that revolving machine parts are sufficiently guarded
- review, revise where applicable, and enforce safety programs that include job-specific procedures for working with guarded machine parts and for shutting off and locking out machines before cleaning or maintenance.

- conduct scheduled and unscheduled worksite safety inspections, which should include observations of employees' work practices.
- develop policies and training programs that address the use of emergency shutoff devices for all workers who work near hazardous machines.
- In addition, employers of workers who are not fluent in English should:
- ensure that all workers receive initial and ongoing instructions on safe work practices in a manner that is clear, complete, and understandable to the employee.