

# Maintenance Man Drawn Into Pipe

A maintenance worker died after being drawn into a 172-inch diameter vacuum pipe at a paper processing plant.

The victim and two co-workers were attempting to replace a blower on a vacuum line that transported wood chips from the milling process into the paper plant.

The crew on the previous shift had prepared the re-placement blower for installation and moved it to the worksite. When the victim and his co-workers arrived at the site they were instructed to remove the faulty blower and install the replacement blower.

After the faulty blower was lifted out of position by a small crane, the victim attempted to walk past the unguarded 172-inch pipe when the vacuum suction pulled his chest against it. He called to his co-workers for help and both men grabbed him and tried to pull him away from the pipe; however, the victim was doubled over backwards and pulled through the pipe by the vacuum until he was stopped by the intake shroud of the next blower on the vacuum line.

**Investigators concluded that, to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:**

- Develop comprehensive, written energy control procedures for maintenance work that may result in employee exposure to hazardous energy.
- Conduct a job hazard analysis to identify potential hazards and implement appropriate control measures for these hazards.
- Encourage dialogue and discussion among rotating shift workers performing the same task so that all workers are familiar with the status of the work being performed.
- Designate a competent person to conduct periodic safety inspections.