Not My Problem Fatality Report

Caught in a Mortar Mixer

An 18-year-old worker died after becoming entangled in a portable mortar mixer at a residential construction site. The victim was cleaning the mixer at the end of his shift to prepare it for the following day. A painter working near the victim heard yells for help and saw the victim's arm stuck in the machine and his body being pulled into the rotating mixer paddles. He ran to the mixer and attempted to turn it off, but could not disengage the gears, so he yelled for help. A co-worker heard the commotion, ran to the machine, and shut it off. Emergency medical services was called and responded within minutes. Rescue workers dismantled the drive mechanism to reverse the mixing paddles and extricate the worker. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Workers must be trained in safety procedures. A safety procedure that applies to this case is "lockout/tagout," which requires turning off and disconnecting machinery or equipment from its energy source(s) before performing service or maintenance. In this example, the worker died when he was pulled into a mortar mixer that was actively operating and not locked out. It was reported that the young person was not professionally trained. An investigation was launched.

To prevent this, employers and employees must:

- Ensure that equipment is turned off and disconnected from its energy sources before cleaning or maintenance.
- Train employees in the recognition and control of hazards.
- Ensure machine and equipment guards remain in place.
- Establish lockout/tagout procedures to guard workers from the unexpected startup of machinery and equipment or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities.
- Ensure that all warning labels on the equipment are clearly visible and equipment is properly maintained.

- Assign safety responsibilities to a competent person at each job site with the authority to enforce safety requirements and take prompt measures to correct unsafe situations.