Oilfield Worker Drowns in Flash Flood

The victim was a foreman of a crew working at a Wyoming rig site. An afternoon lightning storm had forced the workers to shelter in a hut called “the doghouse.” The victim apparently had reservations about continuing the work, but decided to press on.

As the workers returned to work they saw water rising over the road. Minutes after the job was done, the water was over five feet deep. The workers sheltered in the doghouse, leaving the foreman and another man outside.

A worker went back outside and spotted the foreman holding another man out of the water. The foreman’s jacket had caught on debris, and he was struggling to free himself. As the witness watched, the second man was washed downstream, where he was eventually able to pull himself out. But the foreman was too exhausted and entangled to get loose, and he drowned.

The investigation determined that this fatality was “non-preventable,” meaning that every reasonable precaution had been taken. Nonetheless, the investigators repeated that workers must remain alert to rapidly changing conditions.

Do you pay close attention to your surroundings while you work? In almost no time a situation can turn threatening. Your best defense is to spot the danger before it’s too late.

Source: Wyoming Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 93WY15