Operator Crushed inside Knitting Machine

A machine operator at a textile plant died of asphyxia when his torso was compressed in an automated circular knitting machine.

Inside the machine a turntable, rotating at 24 revolutions per minute, supported a roller that collected fabric. Safety gates between support columns protected employees from contacting the rotating turntable. However, the company had no written safety instructions for employees using the machines.

When a machine malfunctioned, the victim shut it off and opened a safety gate to untangle fabric. Two co-workers helped him. He remained inside the machine while they returned to their work areas. When they later heard his scream, they found him trapped between the base frame and rotating turntable. Paramedics extracted him from the machine.

One co-worker reported finding a needle jammed in the “on” button, allowing the machine to operate with safety gates open.

Never bypass safety interlocks. This fatality is a reminder about the purpose of lockout/tagout. It disconnects a machine from its power source, releases stored energy, and prevents energy from being restored to the machine while workers repair or maintain it.