Refuse and Recycle Workers Fatality File

Plastic Recycling employee killed while trying to unclog machine

A 31-year-old employee of Plastic Recycling Inc. died at the company's Indianapolis recycling facility, as reported by Indy Star.

According to a night foreman, the employee was inside a machine attempting to unclog it around 1:30 a.m. when the equipment turned on. The police were called shortly after and found the man facedown on the floor.

Police officers and homicide detectives both arrived to investigate and haven't announced any findings yet.

The cause of the clog is still unknown, yet it could have been a range of things. Clogs are common at recycling facilities due to customers including everything from plastic bags to garden hoses, but the material being handled by Plastic Recycling should have already been sorted. This particular facility specializes in various types of expanded polystyrene foam and rigid polystyrene through a partnership with Dart Container Corporation.

While data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the rate of nonfatal injury and illness among workers in the "waste management and remediation services" category decreased in 2015, the latest fatality data won't be released until December. As highlighted by the Solid Waste Association of North America and other organizations the rate of employee fatalities remains far too high.

In order to combat these types of incidents across all types of recovery facilities, many in the industry are pushing for more regulations on materials like plastic bags in order to keep them

out of the waste stream. This week, California voted 52% to 48% to enact a statewide plastic bag ban, requiring retailers to phase out single-use bags at stores and instead offer recycled paper or reusable bags. While California is often seen as a leader in many waste-related initiatives, the industry may see more of these regulations start to pass, which would in-turn decrease the risk of materials clogging various MRF equipment.