Robot Crushes Experienced Operator

A worker operating an automatic die-cast system died after being crushed between the back end of an industrial robot and a steel safety pole.

The hydraulic robot had been installed in an existing production line to remove die-cast parts from a die-cast machine and to transfer these parts to a trimmer. The victim had 15 years of experience in die-casting and had completed a training course in robotics three weeks before the fatal incident.

He had entered the working range apparently to clean up scrap metal from the floor. Despite training and warnings not to do so, he had crossed a safety rail which surrounded two sides of the robot’s work area. When the robot moved unexpectedly, he was pinned and died of cardio-respiratory arrest.

This fatal incident illustrates the problem of workers failing to recognize all of the hazards associated with robots. Although fatalities have been few so far in comparison to other types of occupational incidents, the increasing use of robotics in many workplaces means more workers need an awareness of the hazards.