Robotic Arm Pulls Manager to His Death

Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) investigators are trying to determine how a robotic arm pulled a manager into a press while it was being cleaned. Steven McGirr, 46, died instantly.

The fatality occurred at HydroDynamic Technologies, a Pontiac, MI, company that manufactures parts for the automotive industry and other applications.

The manager was not the regular operator of the equipment but was familiar with it. He was cleaning the arm when it somehow activated, grabbed him from behind and pushed him into a press.

While rare, worker deaths in robotic arm incidents are not unheard of. For example, an Australian company was fined heavily after a robotic arm crushed a worker’s head. A safety switch should have shut the arm down when the worker entered the area, but it was broken. He was not aware that the switch wasn’t functioning properly.