

Workers in Pit Could not Breathe

Two workers died of oxygen deprivation as they were repairing the concrete wall at a garbage disposal site.

One of them had been attaching anchor bolts to the wall of an intake pit and was riding on a sling suspended from the traveling crane installed at the garbage disposal site. He was trying to build a temporary scaffold by installing a 16-foot (five-meter) metal beam on the two anchor bolts when the beam fell into the pit.

He asked the crane operator to lower the sling and tried to wind the cable around the beam so it could be pulled back up. He suddenly fell forward, unconscious. The crane operator climbed down to try to rescue him, but also collapsed into the pit. They were both found dead, from lack of oxygen. This is a common hazard in confined spaces such as a garbage pit, where poor air circulation results in a concentration of noxious gases and a lack of oxygen. Proper confined space entry procedures must be used for jobs where a worker might encounter atmospheric hazards and need to be rescued.