

SAFETY NOTES

Department of Consumer & Business Services
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division
Salem, OR 97310

Fatality Report

Accident type Asphyxiation/fermentation tank
Industry Winemaking
Employee job title Laborer

Description of accident

On an October day at an Oregon vineyard, a male employee, whose job included performing pump-over operations between wine fermentation tanks, was found draped across the top of a fermentation tank with one arm and his head inside the tank. The general manager/winemaker found the worker and attempted to perform CPR. Paramedics arrived and determined that the worker was dead. The coroner's report, a month later, identified the cause of death as "asphyxiation due to low environmental oxygen level."



Investigation findings

OR-OSHA determined that the employer had committed serious violations by not conducting an evaluation of the confined spaces at the worksite, not informing exposed employees about confined-space hazards by posting signs or by any other effective means, not having a written permit-space entry program available for the employees to inspect, and not providing the hazard-control measures necessary to protect employees from harmful or hazardous conditions. Proposed penalties totaled \$18,000.

To prevent similar accidents

- Whether you operate an established business or a new business, find out what safety and health requirements your business is subject to and comply with them.
- Know what a confined space is and what hazardous atmospheres exist at your workplace and take measures to protect your employees.
- When employees perform tasks that involve hazardous atmospheres, ensure that they never work alone.

Applicable standards

- 29 CFR 1910.146(c)(1)
- 29 CFR 1910.146(c)(2)
- 29 CFR 1910.146(c)(4)
- OAR 437-01-760(1)(c)