

SAFETY NOTES

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

Fatality Report

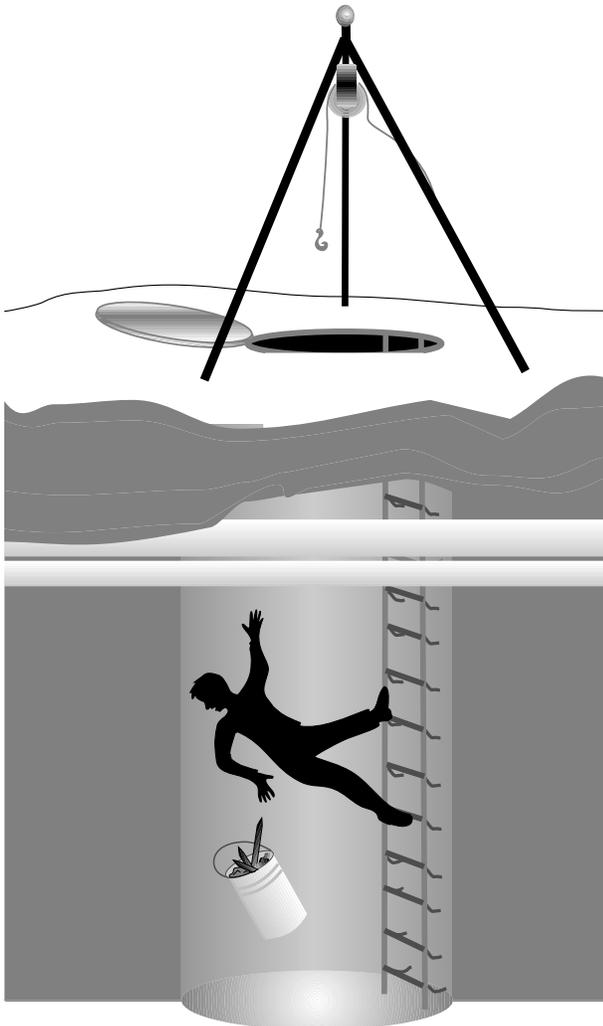
Accident type Fall/impalement
Industry Trucking/Excavation
Employee job title Laborer

Description of accident

On a fall morning, an 18-year-old laborer for a trucking and excavation company was working with two pipelayers to clean up debris in a couple of manholes. The pipelayers were working in a shallow manhole (three or four feet deep), and the laborer had entered a manhole that was approximately 16 feet deep. He had climbed into the manhole on the steel rungs built into the concrete wall of the manhole, carrying a five-gallon bucket containing a few wooden surveyor stakes and some grout. His task was to clean up any debris at the bottom of the manhole. As he worked, the laborer spoke with one of the pipelayers in the other manhole through an eight-inch pipe. The pipelayer heard the laborer preparing to leave the manhole. The laborer had picked up a couple of chunks of stone at the bottom of the hole (about 25 lbs.) and put them into his bucket.

He then attempted to climb out of the manhole carrying the bucket. He fell and was impaled on one of the stakes.

When the pipelayer who had been talking with the laborer through the pipe heard the bucket hitting the floor of the other manhole and the laborer making a sound that indicated pain, he climbed out of the shallower manhole and told the supervisor and the other pipelayer that he thought the laborer had been hurt. They called down the hole, but got no response. The supervisor went down the manhole and quickly emerged to call 911. The other pipelayer went down to assist the injured man. The bucket was retrieved with a rope, but the worker was unable to do anything for the victim. The fire department crew arrived and the laborer was pronounced dead and transported to the medical examiner's office.



Investigation findings

The victim had tried to climb the rungs of the manhole ladder with one hand, while carrying the bucket, which weighed about 25 pounds, in the other hand. Investigators couldn't determine how far up the ladder the laborer was when he fell. The bucket should have been removed from the hole with a line. It is a violation of 29 CFR 1926.1053(b)(22) for the worker to have been carrying a load that could have caused him to lose balance and fall.

To prevent similar accidents

- Always remove equipment and debris from excavations with the proper equipment.
- Never allow workers to ascend and descend ladders carrying loads that might cause them to lose balance.
- Employ the buddy system for workers in excavations and trenches, train employees in safe work practices, and ensure that they look out for each other and for hazards.

Applicable standards

29 CFR 1926.1053(b)(22)