Being Observant Fatality Report



The outcome of employees’ high-risk behaviors associated with low awareness of surroundings can be disastrous. For example, just days before Christmas, an independent contractor at Ford’s auto plant in Kansas City died while working on the assembly line. Noticing a seat out of position in the line carrier, he entered a restricted area and attempted to correctly reposition it in order to avoid a halt in production. While doing so he became caught in the conveyer belt and was pulled along the line, which lifted him 15 feet in the air only to slam him to the ground, breaking his back. He was then dragged along the plant floor for several feet before finally being crushed behind some line machinery. No other workers were in the area at the time to witness the incident, and according to one report the contractor was pinned in that position for hours before he was discovered, by which time his injuries were too severe for him to survive.

The contractor violated the safety policy of not working on moving equipment while in operation in his attempt to resolve the problem quickly without stalling progress on the line, but this story serves as a grave reminder that we must NEVER prioritize production or quality over safety. Had he taken the time to temporarily stop the production line and lockout/tagout the machinery before fixing the misaligned seat, he would likely celebrated Christmas with family.