Maintenance Person Dies After Getting Head Stuck



Alcohol use may have been a major factor in the suffocation of a general maintenance worker repairing a water leak.

The victim was working alone, trying to fix a water leak in a water meter pit that was 14 inches (35.6 centimeters) in diameter and four feet (1.2 meters) deep. The valves he was trying to reach were 36 inches(0.9 meters) below the top of the pit, which was at ground level. He knelt beside the opening on both knees, and reached into the pit until his head, both arms and part of his shoulders were inside the opening. He was stuck upside down, could not free himself, and died from asphyxiation. The man was observed drinking alcohol before starting work on the morning of the accident, and a blood alcohol level of 0.18 percent was detected postmortem.

Protect yourself from preventable tragedy. This fatality occurred because the victim's physical and mental capabilities were impaired by the ingestion of alcohol. Additionally, the repair job would have been much safer with the use of extension tools, which would have eliminated the need to enter the pit, even partially.