

Reel Handler Drowns in Pit



A reel handler fell into a water pit and drowned while attempting to repair a machine used in manufacturing paper.

He was trying to patch the bottom of a wire mesh screen belt. The apparatus, known as the wire, collects paper fibers to form a soft sheet of material. This sheet is then passed to drying and pressing rolls on the paper machine.

Below the wire is a shallow pit where excess water and stock are collected and drained into the lean white water pit, about 12 feet deep. He was working directly over this deeper pit when he lost his balance and fell into it headfirst. He could not swim and he was not wearing fall arrest equipment.

He was found after the pit was drained, but did not respond to lifesaving efforts.

This fatality reminds us of the importance of guarding hazards. The opening to the pit was not covered to prevent someone from falling in. The worker was not protected by a restraining harness or flotation device.