

INCIDENT TYPE:

POTENTIALLY FATAL DROWNING OCCURRENCE
WITHIN A SEWERAGE WETWELL

MORRISON

What happened

Whilst working 6 metres down a wetwell, a Fitter who was up to his thighs in effluent was pulled under the surface for over 10 seconds, when his rope safety line became entangled in a working submersible pump. The Top man raised alarm and pump was shut off immediately. The Top man and two others pulled the safety line; fortunately it disentangled itself. He was pulled upright out of the sewage onto his feet where he was able to exit the chamber.

He was taken to hospital for a check up and the administration of antibiotics.

He was obviously very lucky not to have been drowned or have incurred a major injury.

What was the cause

- Failure to identify all of the hazards when working in a wetwell with the pumps running.
- Failure to keep the safety line taut, and prevent it becoming entangled.
- Failure to follow method statement where the fitter should have been attached to tripod and fall arrester.

What actions were taken

- Readdressing of the risk assessment and confined space procedure.
- Reminder to observe all hazards including existing
- Reminder to always use correct safety equipment when working in confined spaces.
- Reminder to follow all method statements and procedures as written down.



Lessons for the group

- Never work in a wet well whilst a pump is running.
- Top man to ensure that they keep safety lines taut when supervising someone working in a confined space.
- All high-risk activities method statements to be forwarded to Construction Manager for review before job commences.

IF IN DOUBT ASK

Nothing is so important that you cannot take the time to do it safely