

27 November 2020, Ref: 2021076

Accident Notification: Worker found with upper body in pipe

On 24 November 2020, a worker was tasked to carry out arc welding on a pipe. To facilitate welding works, an inert gas was earlier introduced into the pipe. The worker was subsequently found unconscious with his upper body inside the opening of an adjoining pipe. The worker was conveyed to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The Ministry of Manpower has commenced investigations into the accident.

Employers, principals and contractors performing similar work are advised to put in place the necessary controls to protect workers when working with inert gases (e.g. argon). The use of inert gases in a confined space (the adjoining pipe in this case) may inadvertently create an asphyxiation hazard. Communicate to workers the dangers of working with inert gases. Establish and implement a work procedure for the safe application of inert gas in preparation for welding works. Avoid the use of inert gas wherever possible. If inert gas must be used, equip workers with a portable gas detector to detect the lack of oxygen and/or presence of toxics/flammables depending on the work environment. Advise workers never to insert their head into a confined space so long as the atmosphere within is not certain.

Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 27 Nov 2020. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying any liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

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