

Confined Space fatality

What happened?

A survey operator entered a tank without verifying the oxygen levels and unfortunately lost his life.

Details of the Incident

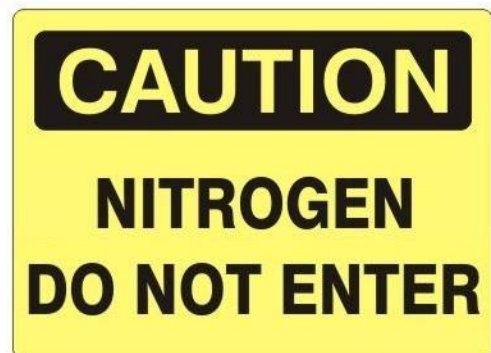
Investigation showed no nitrogen was added in the tank by the depot when it left to go load. The tank left the depot under dry air only. The loading plant started their loading procedure and purged the tank with N₂ themselves and tested the steam coils for leaks. After that they tested the steam coils which they say were not working, a technician from the depot went to the plant and confirmed that the coils were OK but the customer still rejected the tank. The tank was returned to the depot whereby they performed a pressure test on the steam coils for 24 hours. The coils were in good order so the tank was placed back in the storage area where tanks await a cleanliness inspection.

A few days later, the tank was then re-assigned for the original order and the depot surveyor unfortunately did not follow the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that is in place when surveying the unit again before leaving the depot. It was late in the day almost end of the shift and the operator opened the air vent, noticed there was no pressure thus he just went in.

The SOP states: Before entering the tanks oxygen and LEL measurement is mandatory and a tank entry permit must be issued. This was not done obviously, thus the fatality. The person involved was trained and had a confined space entry certificate but complacency got in the way.

What has led to this unfortunate event?

- An unfortunate decision making in the circumstances by the surveyor operator.
- Missing N₂ warning labels by the loading plant
- Unawareness of the N₂ by the supply chain.



What can we learn?

Do not enter a unit without following the proper procedures and completing the correct form!
Do not neglect to follow procedure even though it's late and/or if you're in a hurry.