



SANITATION - FATALITY CASE STUDY

In June 2008, a New Jersey town experienced a tragedy. The following points are being shared with other Sanitation agencies in the hopes that no one will have to repeat the experience. The circumstances presented here were taken from initial reports and should not be taken as facts but rather as points of discussion that can relate to your operations. The Safety Director appreciates the cooperation of the town and their earnest desire that others learn from their tragedy.

The victim is a 32-year-old male, married and with two small children. He had been employed by the municipal sanitation agency for 6 years. A year before the incident, he took a job in the Midwest. When things did not work out, he was re-hired within the same agency in his old position as a Sanitation Laborer in March 2008.

He attended the MSI Sanitation Safety class in 2005. There was no documented sanitation training since that date.

At around 10:30 am, the victim was on the rear passenger-side step. Initial reports indicate he was holding on with both hands, arms fully extended, but looking to the rear.



This picture shows the site of the incident. The next stop would have been approximately 20 yards beyond the telephone pole in the foreground, for a total travel distance of about 50 yards.

Note the proximity of the telephone pole to the curb line. Also, the pole appears to lean slightly toward the street. In the picture, a similarly sized vehicle can be seen 'cheating' over the center line.

The driver was looking at his right-side mirror & noticed how close the mirror cleared the pole. He also noted the position of the rider. He tried to brake as hard as possible without risking throwing the rider off the step. The driver watched as the rear of the victim's head hit the pole.

Initial reports are the driver completed his stop about 10 feet further, with the rider still on the rear step. In the process of stepping off the rear step, the rider collapsed, striking the curb. The driver called 911 on the radio. He moved the truck forward slightly to allow access to the victim by emergency responders.

The victim suffered significant head trauma. He was quickly transported to a nearby hospital. After days in a medically-induced coma, the victim died from his injuries. PEOSH investigated.

Points for Discussion:

1. There is never just one factor in the cause of an accident. How many contributing factors came together to cause this accident? List as many as you can on a blackboard, whiteboard, or flip chart.
2. For each of the contributing factors, brainstorm actions on the part of the rider, driver, and management which could have helped prevent or mitigate this accident?