

Inspector Fainted

EPSC Learning Sheet June 2022



What Happened:

During a tank inspection an inspector put his head inside a tank and fainted as there was a nitrogen atmosphere. Co-workers saved him from asphyxiation.



Aspects:

- Clarify the task and document the risk analysis. What will be done and how? What risks exist and must be excluded? The permit to work mentioned “tank inspection through the manhole”. It was not recognized that this would require a tank entry.
- Prior to inspection the tank was cleaned with nitrogen gas and the manhole was opened. Operation did not consider the remaining Nitrogen as a hazard, did not place a sign “Do not enter” or prohibited tank entry physically. The inspector did not use an oxygen sensor to test the atmosphere before putting his head in the vessel.
- Filling your lungs with Nitrogen gas makes you faint very quickly and kills many in industry.
- Never do a tank entry alone and assure a person at the manhole is available for emergency response.
- Tank entry is a hazardous operation that requires good preparation including testing of the atmosphere.



Inert gas in a confined space is deadly