



June 15 — Just Taking a Look

Passing things in the confined space coworker stuck his head down to see and almost got hit.

I said to stop putting your face down near the hole while passing stuff.

Most injuries don't happen because someone intentionally puts themselves in danger.

Often, they happen because someone gets a little too close.

During a confined space task, employees were passing materials into the work area when a coworker leaned down and put his head near the opening to see what was happening inside. As materials were being passed, he came close to being struck.

The employee observing the situation immediately spoke up and instructed the coworker to stop putting his face near the opening while work was taking place.

At first glance, it may seem harmless. Someone wants a better view of the work. Maybe they're checking progress, answering a question, or simply curious about what's happening inside the space. The problem is that the closer we get to the action, the more we expose ourselves to the hazards that come with it.

Confined space work often involves tools, materials, equipment, and multiple workers operating in a limited area. When objects are being moved through an opening, anyone placing their head, hands, or body near that opening can quickly find themselves in the line of fire.

One of the challenges with routine work is that we become comfortable around activities we've seen many times before. Familiarity can make a hazard seem less serious than it really is. That's why maintaining proper positioning and staying clear of active work areas is so important.

The employee who intervened recognized the risk before someone got hurt and addressed it immediately.

Hazards

- Struck-by hazards
- Line of fire exposure
- Head and face injuries
- Dropped and shifting materials
- Limited visibility around active work areas
- Confined space entry hazards

Words of Wisdom

You don't have to be performing the work to be exposed to the hazard. Sometimes the safest place is a few steps farther away from the action.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever moved closer to a task simply to get a better look?
- What line-of-fire hazards exist in your work area?
- Why do people sometimes underestimate hazards when they're not directly involved in the work?
- How can proper positioning help prevent injuries?
- When should you stop and correct someone who has placed themselves in a hazardous position?

Closing Thought

Curiosity is natural. Putting yourself in the line of fire doesn't have to be.