

## N E W S   R E L E A S E

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### **Cal/OSHA Cites Two Employers for Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Incident at San Francisco Airport**

**Foster City**—Cal/OSHA has cited two employers for serious accident-related health and safety violations after workers were poisoned by carbon monoxide while in a confined space at San Francisco International Airport.

Two plumbers from Gladiator Rooter & Plumbing were working in a crawl space replacing underground sewer pipes for airline caterer Gate Gourmet, Inc. on December 22, 2018. The plumbers were using a gasoline-powered saw to cut through concrete when they were overcome by carbon monoxide gas emitted from the equipment, causing one of the workers to lose consciousness. Emergency crews assisted the workers, one of whom was hospitalized for two days.

“These workers were fortunate because performing work in confined spaces can be deadly, especially when oxygen levels are reduced or when deadly gases are present,” said Cal/OSHA Deputy Chief of Enforcement Debra Lee. “Employers must identify and evaluate potential hazards before workers enter confined spaces so they can ensure workers are trained and a rescue plan is in place in case of emergency.”

Cal/OSHA’s investigation found that Gate Gourmet, Inc. did not inform Gladiator Rooter & Plumbing that the crawl space was a permit-required confined space, and did not provide information on the potential hazards posed by entering the space. Cal/OSHA also found that Gladiator Rooter & Plumbing did not have a safety and health program and did not train workers. In addition, the employer did not develop a confined space program, take steps to mitigate the hazards and did not have a rescue plan.

Cal/OSHA cited Gladiator Rooter & Plumbing \$50,850 for eight violations, including two serious accident-related, two serious, and four general in nature.

The serious accident-related violations were cited for the company’s failure to implement a permit-required confined space program and its failure to train its employees on working safely in confined spaces. The serious violations were cited for the company’s failure to develop and implement a written permit space program and failure to obtain information about permit space hazard and provide that information to the workers entering the space.

Cal/OSHA cited Gate Gourmet \$18,000 in proposed penalties for one serious accident-related violation for failing to communicate with Gladiator Rooter & Plumbing about confined space hazards and precautions.

A violation is classified as serious when there is a realistic possibility that death or serious harm could result from the actual hazard created by the violation, and violations are classified as accident-related when the injury, illness or fatality is caused by the violation.

Confined spaces are defined as large enough for workers to enter, but have limited openings for exit and entry, with a potential for hazards related to the atmosphere and space. They are found in multiple industries, and include water and sewer pipes, boilers, silos, kilns, vaults, tunnels and pumping stations.

Construction industry employers should review and follow confined space guidance detailed on pages 26-29 of the updated [Cal/OSHA Pocket Guide for the Construction Industry](#). Cal/OSHA has other [confined space resources](#) available for employers in the general industry.

All employers in California are required to have an effective written injury and illness prevention program, a safety program to identify, assess and control hazards in the workplace. [Cal/OSHA has online tools](#) and [publications](#) to guide employers on how to establish an effective safety program.

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Peter Melton or Lucas Brown at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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The California Department of Industrial Relations, established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the Labor & Workforce Development Agency. For general inquiries, contact DIR's Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate division or program in our department.