

# THE BLADE

## Two Andersons employees dead after being trapped in grain storage tank

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Two men died Friday upon being trapped inside a grain storage tank at The Andersons facility in South Toledo.

Firefighters responded shortly after 9 a.m. for a grain rescue at the facility, 125 Edwin Dr. near the I-75 DiSalle Bridge.

Dr. Diane Barnett, said the bodies of the men were recovered from the tank late Friday afternoon. She identified them as Joshua Stone, 29, of Rossford, and James Heilman, 56, of Perrysburg.

They and another man were inside the tank breaking up compacted grain in an effort to unplug a blocked hole, Dr. Barnett said. She had no information about the third man.



An autopsy is scheduled for Saturday.

Exactly how the two men became trapped was unclear to rescue crews on the scene. On Friday morning Pvt. Sterling Rahe, Toledo Fire and Rescue Department spokesman said removing them from the facility was the first priority. About 10:30 a.m., firefighters shifted from a rescue to recovery effort, he said.

Private Rahe told reporters about 11:30 a.m. that one person had died and one remained trapped. The Andersons confirmed two fatalities at about 12:30 p.m.

An effort to free trapped individuals usually involves about four or five first responders, Private Rahe said. Firefighters rotated crews of about 15 to 20 people as part of their response in this case because of the dangerous nature of trying to pull someone from a grain elevator.

“Every time you take one scoop, or a bucket, five more come in. That's what we were up against,” Private Rahe said. “We were in there, we built makeshift walls around the individual that we were [trying to rescue], while simultaneously trying to establish where the other one was at.”

The department views these types of calls as a “low-frequency, high-risk” event, Private Rahe said.

Friday also posed extreme heat, with a high temperature of about 95 degrees and excessive humidity.



The silo was not full, but held an estimated 180,000 bushels of grain at the time of the incident.

In a statement, Corey Jorgenson, president of assets and originations for The Andersons Trade Group, said the organization is profoundly shaken by the tragedy.

“We are working closely with authorities to investigate the incident. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of our two teammates,” Mr. Jorgenson said.

Friday's incident is not the first time individuals died in local grain elevator or storage tank accidents.

In 2006, a man employed at The Andersons grain storage complex in Maumee died in an accident outside a storage tank off Illinois Avenue between Conant and Ford streets. Rodney Dinkens, 38, of Maumee, was one of four people working to remove wheat from a tank when he was suddenly buried.

A federal grain inspector from Tontogany died in 2003 at an elevator in Huron. Joyce Hoops, 53, stumbled over the edge of a shaft in the Peavey Grain elevator and fell 11 stories.

In a different sort of incident at the Edwin Drive location in early July, 2005, at least two explosions at the grain elevator along the Maumee River near I-75 hurled sheets of metal skyward, igniting a conveyor system and sparking a two-alarm fire that burned out of control for several hours.

Authorities closed I-75 in the area for about four hours, forcing motorists onto local streets, and shutting the Maumee River to pleasure and commercial craft.