

# Putting Production before Safety Results in Temp Worker's Death



One of the challenges safety professionals face is convincing senior management not to prioritize production over workers' safety. Cutting corners on safety measures can lead to tragic results. And if management won't take your word for it, tell them about this tragedy in the US.

As part of an investigation into temporary workers, ProPublica looked into the case of Janio Salinas, a 50-year-old temp worker who was working at a sugar plant in Fairless Hills, PA.

Throughout the morning, Salinas and other workers had been bagging mounds of sugar. But sugar clumps kept clogging the massive hopper, forcing them to climb inside with shovels to help the granules flow out the funnel-like hole at the bottom.

Coming back from lunch that day, one worker said he'd seen Salinas digging in the sugar. But when he looked back, Salinas was gone. All that was left was a shovel buried up to its handle. Then, peering through a small gap in the bottom of the hopper, someone saw what appeared to be blue jeans.

It was Salinas. He'd been buried alive in sugar.

The subsequent federal safety investigation found that a safety device that would have prevented Salinas' death had been removed just 13 days before the incident because a manager believed it was slowing down production.

Barring workers from removing machine guards and other safety devices is critical but it's not enough. You also need to ensure that supervisors, managers and others in the company don't undermine your safety efforts by taking similar action.

This tragedy also reinforces the notion that workers from temp agencies are particularly vulnerable when it comes to workplace safety. You have a duty to ensure the safety of these workers when they're in your workplace. So be sure to give them safety training, adequate supervision, proper PPE, etc. just as you would provide for your own employees.