



## Compactors In Retail Settings Can Be Deadly

Insights

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OSHA regularly cites retail employers for violations relating to their compactors and balers, many of which are old and ill-maintained. I wish that we could say that deaths involving store contractors are rare, but that would not be true. Please see the recent story below:

REDWOOD City, Calif. -- An employee at a Redwood City Grocery Outlet was killed Thursday night in an accident involving a machine used to compact cardboard for recycling, officials said Friday.

The store janitor was found by another employee around 10 p.m. crushed to death in a compactor/baler in the store at 1833 Broadway, according to California Division of Occupational Safety and Health spokesman Peter Melton.

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Below is a typical news release on a common retail OSHA citation:

ALBANY, N.Y. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has cited Dick's Sporting Goods for six alleged violations of workplace safety standards after an OSHA inspection identified several hazards at the retailer's store at the Aviation Mall in Queensbury. The Pennsylvania-based retailer faces a total of \$57,300 in proposed fines.

OSHA inspectors found that workers at the Queensbury store were periodically required to enter a trash compactor that had not first been de-energized in order to remove cardboard blockages. Additionally, the store lacked the means and procedures for employees to enter and work safely in such a confined space, and training was not provided on the hazards and safeguards associated with work in a confined space. Finally, access to fire extinguishers was blocked and employees were not trained in how to use fire extinguishers in the event of a fire.

"Even in a retail outlet, employees can be exposed to deadly or disabling hazards if the proper safeguards and training are absent, as they were here," said Edward Jerome, OSHA's area director in Albany. "These workers could have been crushed or burned. For the safety and health of all of its employees, I urge this employer to examine safety and health issues at its other stores and promptly take corrective action."

Two repeat violations with \$33,000 in fines were cited for the blocked fire extinguishers and lack of fire extinguisher training. Four serious violations with \$24,300 in fines were cited for the confined space hazards and a missing fire extinguisher.

OSHA even treats the subject in its [Youth Worker Safety materials](#).

In fact, the DOL expressly deals with compactors in its restrictions on minor workers:

Minors under 18 years of age may not operate or unload scrap paper balers or paper box compactors. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds may load such machines under certain specific circumstances. (See Fact Sheet #57, in this series Hazardous Occupations Order No. 12. Rules for Employing Youth and the Loading of Power-Driven Balers and Compactors under the FLSA.)

The tragic California accident is a good reminder to check interlocks, signage, training and lock-out procedures for compactors, as well as those persistent retail setting repeatable violations involving partially blocked doors, fire extinguishers and electric panels in store rooms.

### ***Related People***



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