

## **5. Drowning**

A 48-year-old public works employee drowned when he entered a drainage culvert to determine why water was not flowing. The victim and a co-worker were sent to pick up brush and debris in the streets and around drainage culverts. Meanwhile, a complaint was lodged that a large amount of water was flooding the street at a specific street intersection. Two other workers went to the intersection to determine why the flooding was occurring. They observed water flowing over the walls of a creek bed and running into the street, but they did not see any brush or debris. At the other end of the culvert, they found only a small amount of water flowing out of the culvert. One of these employees crawled into the culvert to see what was preventing the water from flowing through the culvert. The victim and his co-worker, who had been picking up debris, arrived at the scene. The worker inside the culvert exited and reported that he could not see what was causing the blockage. The victim stated that he would go inside the culvert to see if he could determine what the problem was. He was told that if he did find the blockage he was not to try and dislodge it himself, but report back and they would use a chain to pull it out. The victim was inside the culvert for about 10 minutes when the flow increased and a small amount of leaves came out of the culvert. The co-workers on the scene called out for the victim for approximately 25 to 30 minutes, but got no response. Finally, one of the co-workers entered the culvert and came back out stating it was too dark to see without a flashlight. After a flashlight was obtained, he again entered the culvert and crawled about 20-to-30 feet inside where he found the body of the victim. The victim was face down in the culvert with debris on and around him. Emergency services were called and the victim was transported to a local hospital where he was found to be deceased.

### **Notice of Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Conditions**

#### **Violation 1**

Item 1 1910.146(c)(1)	The employer failed to evaluate the workplace to determine if any spaces were permit-required confined spaces.
Item 2 1910.146(c)(2)	The employer did not inform exposed employees, by posting danger signs or by any other equally effective means, of the existence and location of and the danger posed by the permit spaces.
Item 3 1910.146(c)(4)	When the employer decided that its employees would enter permit spaces, the employer did not develop and implement a written permit space entry program.

**See Photo on Next Page**



Where victim entered the culvert