

Worker Exposed to Paint Vapours

Incident Date: December 10, 2021 / Location: Calgary, AB / Industry: Residential Painting



AI Teaching Illustration. Coloured haze represents an air hazard that may be invisible. Positions and layout are conceptual, not an exact reconstruction.

What Happened

Two painting contractors had moved to the basement of a new Calgary townhouse. One saw the other on the floor. While approaching to help, that contractor also began losing consciousness and collapsed. Both had been exposed to paint vapours.

After a missed check-in at home, a family friend found both unconscious around 12:45 a.m. One died; the other received hospital treatment. Investigators found spilled paint or lacquer downstairs and two half-face respirators upstairs.

Why This Became Fatal

The same atmosphere affected both workers. Approaching a collapsed person can expose a would-be rescuer to the same hazard. The report identifies paint fumes/vapours, but does not establish a specific chemical concentration. Respirators found elsewhere do not establish what protection was being used.

NEVER FORGET.

LET THEIR STORY PREVENT RECURRENCE.

What Safe Looks Like

Assess the products, control exposure and prepare for an emergency.



1 Know the Products

Review safety data and choose less hazardous products where possible.

2 Control the Air

Verify ventilation and select respiratory protection from the assessment.

3 Protect the Rescuer

Keep out of suspect air. Call emergency services and prevent entry.

AI Teaching Illustration. Work paused for assessment. Testing must target actual contaminants; a generic meter may miss solvents. **LSR:** assess Confined Space applicability; not established here.

Investigation Outcome

Following its October 20, 2022 enforcement review, OHS determined that **prosecution or an administrative penalty was not appropriate** in the circumstances. The investigation was completed April 6, 2023. The public report describes no employer corrective-action program or separate supervisor penalty. It does not establish the basement as a confined space.

Talk It Through with Your Crew

- 1 Where do we use coatings or solvents in rooms with limited airflow?
- 2 What confirms ventilation and respiratory protection suit the actual products?
- 3 If someone collapses, how do we get help without exposing another person?
- 4 Would you stop or refuse work if the air hazard or controls were unknown?

SAFETY COMES FIRST.

Your Right to Refuse – Alberta. You may refuse work you reasonably believe presents an undue hazard: a serious and immediate threat. Promptly report the refusal and reasons to your employer or supervisor. They must investigate. Contact Alberta OHS if unresolved. Take reasonable care not to endanger others. You are protected from reprisal.

Sources: [Alberta OHS investigation F-OHS-264535](#), pp. 2-6; summary completed April 6, 2023. [CCOHS respiratory protection](#). [Alberta refusal guidance](#). Prepared October 19, 2026. LSR links are learning associations, not findings of a breach.

NEVER FORGET.

LET THEIR STORY PREVENT RECURRENCE.