

Pennsylvania woman killed in factory meat grinder

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Jill Greninger, 35, was killed on the job Monday when she was pulled into an industrial meat grinder at her workplace in rural northern Pennsylvania.

The accident took place at the Economy Locker Storage Company in the small town of Muncy, Pennsylvania. Greninger was found only after a coworker noticed that the machine was making strange sounds.

The cause of the accident is uncertain because Greninger was working alone near the meat grinder at approximately 11:30 a.m. on Monday, the time of the accident.

“We don't know if she fell in or was pulled in as she was perhaps reaching for something in the grinder, which was about 6 feet off the ground,” Lycoming County Coroner Charles E. Kiessling told a local newspaper. Kiessling believes that Greninger was standing on stairs above the grinder when the accident took place.

Friends described Greninger, who reportedly had worked at the plant for more than four years, as an “amazing person” who “touched so many lives.” Facebook images indicate that she was a mother to at least one child.

“My heart goes out to everyone who is affected by this,” a neighbor said. “Everyone is shaken and thinks that this is a tragedy that something like this had to happen to such a young lady.”

The Economy Locker Storage Company is a small plant apparently owned by a regional firm called Country Store Brand, whose website reports that it has been in business since 1905. That was, coincidentally, the same year that Upton Sinclair published his journalistic novel *The Jungle*, which brought to light horrific conditions in the meatpacking industry including workers falling to their deaths into vats of

acids and other deadly chemicals.

Very little information has been released about Economy Locker, and it has not responded to media inquiries. It is, however, suggestive of unsafe conditions that Greninger was working alone in her section of the plant when the accident took place.

Currently, injury and illness rates are 2.5 times higher in meatpacking than the national industrial average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The real statistic is likely much higher, as deregulation, the rollback of inspections, “self-compliance” policies and the betrayals and hollowing out of the meatpacking unions have created a situation in which the reporting of accidents may be the exception to the rule.

According to a recent study by the *Guardian* and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, US meat industry workers are three times more likely to suffer serious injury than the average worker. Amputations from workplace accidents occur at the rate of at least two per week.

The Economy Locker plant is located in Lycoming County, whose largest city is Williamsport, with a population of roughly 28,000. Like much of rural Pennsylvania, Lycoming County suffers from high poverty rates in spite of relatively low unemployment. Even in households with one or more wage earners, most families struggle to make ends meet.

In the Williamsport school district, for example, 62.5 percent of the children live in households whose income does not rise above 185 percent of the official federal poverty level. The median household income in the city is a mere \$26,000, less than half the national median.

The largest employer in Muncy, where the Economy Locker meat plant is located, is the Pennsylvania state prison for women, SCI Muncy. The prison currently

houses 1,400 inmates, only some 1,000 fewer people than live in the town.



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