Contract technician dies at Applied Materials facility in Austin, Texas

Our reporter
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A worker died at the Applied Materials Harris Branch manufacturing facility in Austin, Texas, in Building 34. Details of the death remain scarce, and the company has not publicly explained what happened.

Two internal emails were sent to workers at the site. The first, sent on the day of the death, informed workers of a medical emergency in Building 34 after a large number of emergency vehicles were already on site. An email the following day confirmed the death, stated that the worker was a contractor and that the relevant contract agency was notifying the family. The company attributed the death to an unspecified non-work-related medical event.

An Applied Materials worker said coworkers reported hearing a large pop or bang around the time of the incident. The source said the contractor had been at the facility only a few weeks and was working as a test technician, a job that involves electrical test equipment.

Workers in the area where the death occurred were sent home for the day. Many were visibly shaken or crying following the incident.

The worker also described previous near-miss electrical incidents at the site in recent years. In one serious incident, a worker holding two cables received an electrical shock as a large arc appeared between them. The worker had to be rescued with a shepherd's hook after the alternating current caused the muscles in the hands to lock around the cables. Another incident involved an accidentally electrified platform.

Basic questions remain unanswered. Applied Materials has not said what work the contractor was performing at the time, what the medical event was, what emergency treatment was provided or whether the electrical equipment and systems in the area were examined after the incident. It is also not known why workers in the area were sent home for the day.

Workers have a right to know how one of their coworkers died while on the job and what emergency response was provided. Response time, the availability of emergency equipment and the training of responders can be the difference between life and death.

The facility directly employs around 1,800 to 2,400 workers and also employs a large number of contract workers, including maintenance workers and technicians. According to OSHA's Injury Tracking Application data, the site recorded 30 injuries in 2025 and an annual average of 4,325 employees working at the site. No fatalities were listed in the 2025 data.

Applied Materials is a multinational manufacturer of semiconductor production equipment with operations in the United States and internationally. The company reported record third-quarter 2026 revenue of $9.12 billion, up 25 percent from a year earlier, amid a sharp expansion of investment in advanced semiconductors driven in large part by artificial intelligence. Its second-quarter 2026 revenue was $7.91 billion, with GAAP net income of $2.806 billion. CEO Gary Dickerson received $29.6 million in total compensation for 2025.

Another third-party contractor died on February 11 at Samsung's semiconductor plant under construction in Taylor, northeast of Austin. Samsung confirmed that the worker was employed by OneClass/Shinsung G&A and said emergency responders from the site and surrounding community responded. The company initially released no details about what caused the death, saying local authorities and regulatory agencies were investigating.

The Applied Materials death comes amid a series of high-profile workplace fatalities. On August 13, 28-year-old Jonathan Stepp was killed while operating a pot hauler at Cleveland-Cliffs Burns Harbor Works in northwest Indiana. On August 18, 43-year-old Andrew

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Block was crushed while performing maintenance at Kaiser Aluminum in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The same day, Heladio Perez and Mary Allen were killed in an explosion at Brent Industries in Toledo, Ohio. On September 2, 33-year-old Bradley Clouse was crushed while performing maintenance at the Astemo Americas auto parts plant in Berea, Kentucky.

There were 5,070 fatal work injuries in the United States in 2024, the latest year for which Bureau of Labor Statistics data are available, a rate of 3.3 deaths per 100,000 full-time-equivalent workers. Texas recorded 557 occupational deaths, the highest total of any state, and a fatality rate of 3.9 per 100,000 full-time-equivalent workers.

At Applied Materials, workers have still been given no explanation beyond the company's statement that the contractor suffered a non-work-related medical event. The reports from the shop floor about a loud bang and previous electrical incidents make it all the more necessary for the company to disclose what happened in Building 34.

If you or someone you know has information about this death, including the circumstances of the incident, the emergency response, electrical conditions in Building 34 or previous safety incidents at the facility, please fill out the form below. Your name and other identifying information will be kept confidential to protect you from retaliation.

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