DURYEA — A federal workplace safety agency has fined a railcar maintenance company more than $500,000 in connection with the death of an employee in Coxton Yards on May 31.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited Dana Railcare — based in Wilmington, Delaware — for confined space hazards after an employee asphyxiated while servicing a rail car containing crude oil sludge, according to a news release.

The Luzerne County Coroner’s Office identified the victim as Justin Fields, 29, of Maryland, in June.

The railcar service provider faces $551,226 in proposed penalties.

OSHA cited the company on four willful and three serious violations for failing to protect employees from the hazards of entering permit-required confined spaces, and inadequate respiratory protection procedures.

OSHA has placed the company in its Severe Violator Enforcement Program.

“This tragedy could have been prevented if the employer had followed proper safety procedures for entering and cleaning railcars,” said Loren Sweatt, principal deputy assistant secretary of labor for occupational safety and health. “Employers that fail to comply with the law will continue to see full and fair enforcement.”

“Companies are legally required to test and monitor confined spaces for oxygen content before and during entry to confined spaces,” said OSHA Wilkes-Barre Area Director Mark Stel Mack.

The company has 15 business days from receipt of the citations and penalties to comply, request an informal conference with OSHA’s area director, or contest the findings before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.