

Safety Bulletin

Date: July 2024

Large number of hand and finger injuries reported

This safety bulletin provides safety advice for the NSW mining industry.

Issue

The Resources Regulator has received 50 reports of injuries relating to hand, and fingers in the past 2 years. Of these, 12 have resulted in serious injuries to workers. These injuries represent a significant injury to the individual and may result in surgery, lengthy rehabilitation periods and potentially lifelong impairment.

Circumstances

Incident 1 – 9 March 2024

An agitator operator suffered a crush injury to the left thumb, which required surgery. The operator was clearing material into the rear of the bowl when rotating machinery made contact with the operator's thumb.

Figure 1: An X-ray showing the thumb injury



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Incident 2 – 19 March 2023

An underground fitter was changing a feed rope on a Sandvik development drill. During the fitting, it was identified that the drifter needed manual adjustment. To make the manual adjustment, a sling was installed onto the drifter at one end. While installing the other end onto a centraliser, the operator operated the lever controlling the boom movement while the fitter's thumb was still under the sling. This degloved the end of the fitter's right hand thumb. The fitter was taken to hospital for treatment.

Figure 2: A simulation of where the fitter's thumb was caught



Incident 3 – 18 February 2024

A fitter was entering a Jumbo drill cabin and as he closed the door, the latch did not close properly. The fitter reopened and closed the door with his hand still in the door resulting in a fractured finger.

Figure 3: Showing where the fitter's fingers were placed in the door



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Recommendations

Finding solutions to eliminate hand injuries should focus on the hierarchy of controls. It is recommended mine operators:

- consider the hierarchy of controls when completing risk assessments
- use guards or isolation to eliminate the opportunity for workers to enter crush areas, pinch points and entanglement hazards
- ensure work area lighting is suitable for the task being conducted
- consider visual aids such as fluorescent or bright-coloured gloves that can be more easily seen in dark environments
- involve workers to identify pinch/crush points and identify solutions to control the hazard. For example, in man baskets place handrails inside the baskets to eliminate the need to grab the top of the basket
- ensure isolation and permit-to-work systems are implemented to ensure workers are not exposed to moving objects including being trapped by moving machinery/equipment or being trapped between stationary and moving objects
- provide workers with information, training, instruction and supervision on working with equipment that has moving parts, sharp equipment, tools and pinch points. Workers new to the mining industry will need additional training and supervision.
- ensure workers are provided with and are using the correct tools and equipment to undertake the task.
- Additional corrective actions identified in investigation reports from hand injuries must be implemented and communicated to workers to avoid the same injury from reoccurring again.
- When components and parts are being removed, loads must be secured and supported and potential load movement should be considered when identifying hazards.
- Workers need to consider where they place their hands to avoid the potential for falling objects such as drill steels and material such as rocks and strata.
- If fixed guarding is not appropriate, consider interlocked guarding so that a machine cannot be started until the guarding is closed.

Note: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this safety bulletin and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety bulletin should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's communal area, such as your notice board where appropriate.

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