

INVESTIGATION INFORMATION RELEASE

Worker seriously injured from fall

Incident date: 18 February 2020

Event: Worker sustains serious arm and leg injuries after handrail on haul truck access ladder fails

Location: Wilpinjong Coal Mine

Overview

A hand rail on the access ladder of a Caterpillar 789D failed, causing a worker to fall about 1 to 1.5 metres to the ground. The worker sustained serious arm and leg injuries which required surgery.

Figure 1 Failed handrail on haul truck



The mine

Wilpinjong Coal Mine is owned and operated by Peabody Energy. It is a thermal coal operation which mines the Ulan seam, located about 40 kilometres north east of Mudgee.

The incident

On 18 February 2020 at approximately 7:00pm, an operator was in the process of completing a pre-start inspection on a Caterpillar 789D haul truck. The operator had begun ascending the truck's access ladder when one of the ladder's handrails failed. The operator fell off the third or fourth step of the lower section of the access ladder, approximately 1 to 1.5 metres to the ground. The operator sustained arm and leg fractures. Nearby workers assisted the worker and enacted the site's emergency response procedure. The worker was transported by ambulance to hospital, and later underwent surgery to repair the fractures.

Initial indications are that the handrail failed as a result of wear on the pivot points connecting the lower fixed and moving handrail sections. Following an inspection of the mine's haul truck fleet, similar defects were identified on six other haul trucks at the mine. Several days later, a further defect was identified on the access ladder of a different haul truck during a routine inspection by an operator. This also resulted in a failed handrail, however did not cause injury.

Figure 2 Failed handrail from initial incident



Figure 3 Failed handrail from second incident



The investigation

The NSW Resources Regulator responded and has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstance of the incident. The mine operator is cooperating with the investigation.

Initial safety recommendations

A person falling from height from mobile plant is a foreseeable risk and adequate measures should be put in place to control the risk. The provision of safe access equipment on mobile plant is a critical control measure to reduce the risk of falling from mobile plant.

Mine operators must manage the risk of a person falling that is reasonably likely to cause injury to that person or any other person. There are several health and safety duties and requirements set out in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013.

These duties are applicable to persons conducting businesses or undertakings that operate mobile plant and to suppliers and manufactures of mobile plant. Information on safe access to earth moving machinery is provided to industry through WHS legislation, approved codes of practice, ISO Standards, Australian Standards and published mine design guidelines.

In particular, mine operators should review:

- clause 78 and 79 of the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (NSW) for the management of risk of falls
- MDG 15 Guideline for mobile and transportable equipment for use in mines (March 2002) (i.e. provisions relating to access to equipment, walkways and platforms).

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- [SafeWork NSW, Managing the risks of falls at workplaces code of practice \(August 2019\)](#)
- [Mine Design Guideline 15 \(MDG15\) - Mobile and transportable plant for use on mines and petroleum sites](#)

About this information release

The Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious incident in the mining industry. Further information may be published as it becomes available.

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