

WorkSafe finds basic failures at Taylor's limeworks accident; quarry to re-open

Matt Freeman - Mon, 04 Apr 2016



WorkSafe will not press charges against a Canterbury quarry firm that saw its owner killed in a landslide, despite finding basic failings in its investigation.

Murray Taylor was killed in June 2015 after the excavator he was using was crushed under 1000 tonnes of rock at his limeworks near Waikari.

The rock face he was excavating was inherently unstable without any kind of benching in place and dangerous overhangs of rock. WorkSafe's investigation found geotechnical checks to ensure wall stability were not carried and staff were inadequately trained and supervised.

Taylor also wasn't legally qualified to run a quarry, lacking a current certificate of competence.

WorkSafe Chief Inspector of Investigations Keith Stewart found geotechnical checks to make the quarry safe, and adequate staff training were not completed. "Quarry work is inherently risky unless it is done correctly," he says. "In this case no geotechnical assessment had been carried out to determine the nature of the rock wall. That would have helped identify the safest way to tackle excavation work." Further, there was "no evidence procedures were in place to ensure that staff were adequately trained" at the quarry.

Despite having a legal obligation to hold a certificate of competence, Taylor did not hold one.

"Merely holding a certificate might not have prevented this incident - but to obtain one he would have had to prove he had the required knowledge and skills which could have been applied to this work."

Stewart says there would be "nothing gained" from laying charges against Taylor's company as he was the sole director.

Quarry to re-open

WorkSafe says that it has been advised work was under way to get Taylor's quarry operating again. "A contractor has been employed to remediate the site to make it safe for quarrying operations to begin. We have not been advised when that work will begin."

The contractor advised WorkSafe that an A-grade certificate of competence holder would manage the work.