

Safety alert

Mines Inspectorate

Safety alert no. 249 (Version 1)
16 September 2010

Injury while working from a loader bucket

Mine Type: All Mine Types

Incident: A coal mine worker fell from the bucket of a load haul dump (LHD) machine, receiving head, wrist and knee injuries. The machine's bucket was being used as a low level working platform, from which to break a line of auxiliary ventilation tubes. With the fan still running, and hence with suction pressure still on the tubes, the worker attempted to split the tubes by removing the hanging chains and pulling on the sagging tubes. When the worker eventually parted the tubes, they moved unexpectedly sending him sideways, causing him to fall from the bucket and hit his head on the floor.

Equipment: Load haul dump vehicle (LHD), Auxiliary ventilation system

Hazard: Fall from height

Cause: The Incident Cause Analysis Method (ICAM) investigation identified the **root cause** as a **failure to follow site procedures**, as training documents for the LHD **specifically prohibited working from the bucket**. A man basket that could have been used was available nearby. Contributing factors relating to the task included a failure to identify the hazard of fan pressure acting on the tubes, and the lack of a safe work procedure for splitting the tubes.



Comments:

- Absent safety features, including poor footing, lack of edge protection, and no emergency stop, combined with the potential for unexpected dynamic movement, makes the loader bucket an unsuitable mobile working platform. Working from an LHD bucket presents an unacceptable level of risk.
- There is clearly a need to follow agreed safe working procedures, and provide for effective supervision.
- People should not be transported or lifted on work platforms unless it is designed and fit for that purpose. (Refer to 'AS 2550.10-2006 Cranes, hoists and winches - Safe use - Mobile elevating work platforms', for information on the design, testing and operation of elevated work platforms)

- The bucket in this case, positioned less than 0.5 metres from the ground, clearly demonstrates that significant risk of fall injury exists even when working at low height.

Recommendations:

1. Everyone at a mine should be fully aware of their obligations under mining safety and health legislation, including compliance with safety and health management system procedures.
2. Employers should assist by clearly communicating the 'obligations of persons generally' under mining safety and health legislation to their employees,
3. Mines should consider behavioural safety programs to reinforce the safety obligations and behavioural expectations held of persons at the mine.
4. Review availability and location of work platforms (man baskets) relative to work areas, to ensure there are sufficient available when needed.
5. Consider and review risk controls for tasks at the mine which may involve working at low height.
6. Review safe work procedures for tasks involving auxiliary ventilation systems, to ensure the hazard of potential energy from fan ventilating pressure is considered and appropriately controlled.

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Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety alert. Any such advice supplied to site should reach those who require it, and it should also be placed on the mine notice boards.

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