

# Safety alert

Mines Inspectorate

Safety alert no. 259  
15 March 2011

## Injury from a hardened steel sledgehammer

**Mine type:** All mine types

**Incident:** A driller was using a hardened steel sledgehammer to help break out a hardened steel drill rod on a reverse circulation drill rig when a piece of the hammer splintered off and lodged in his shoulder.

**Equipment:** Hardened steel sledgehammer

**Hazard:** Hardened steel tools used to hit hardened steel parts/objects can shatter or splinter, creating flying shards of steel.



Hardened steel sledgehammer with steel shard

### Cause:

- Lack of knowledge on the hazards of using hardened steel hammers on hardened steel parts;
- Poor communication between maintenance and operations personnel on this hazard;
- Failure to implement an earlier decision to consider alternatives to the sledgehammer for manual handling reasons.

**Comments:** An incident review indicates this may be standard practice in many exploration operations.

### Recommendations:

1. Review site procedures and practices to ensure that hardened steel sledgehammers are not used on hardened steel parts and equipment.
2. If a sledgehammer is required, ensure it is made from an alternative material, e.g. a copper faced hammer.
3. Where possible investigate alternatives to using a sledgehammer, for example, when breaking out rods is a C-clamp appropriate?
4. Ensure that mine workers are aware of this hazard.

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