

Safety Alert

Mines

Mines Inspectorate

Safety Alert No. 266
23 May 2011

Managing hot-seat changeovers

Mine type: Surface coal mine | **Equipment:** Heavy mobile plant | **Hazard:** Near collision of two vehicles and near collision of a vehicle and pedestrian during hot-seat changeovers

Incident 1: In conducting a hot-seat changeover on a rear dump truck at the ROM Pad, the oncoming operator drove his light vehicle up to the truck and parked out of its line of sight, in violation of the no-go zone for light vehicles. The hot-seat change was completed and the truck then drove over the light vehicle. Fortunately, the off-going operator exited the light vehicle before impact. A constant alarm from a defective proximity device on nearby plant contributed to the incident because the noise interfered with the truck's proximity warning device.

Incident 2: During a hot-seat changeover on a rear dump truck at the go-line, the oncoming operator, unaware that the vehicle was also being refuelled, drove off with the fuelling line still attached. Fortunately, the service truck operator was not injured.

Causes:

- operator inattention
- conducting a hot-seat change in an active working area — and supervisors not recognising this as an obvious hazard, leading to the practice becoming commonplace
- failure to repair a defective alarm
- poor or absent risk management
- standard operating procedure (SOP) not including management of hot-seat changeovers

Comments:

- The investigation into these incidents found that the safety and health management systems at each mine had not adequately considered hot-seat changeovers and consequently risk was not being managed to 'as low as reasonably achievable' (ALARA).
- The first incident highlights the risk in conducting hot-seat changeovers at an active work area rather than in the less complicated, more easily managed confines of an organised go-line or hard-stand area. The mine's SOP has been amended to prohibit hot-seat change on all rubber-tyred plant other than at a go-line or hard-stand area and to manage that process, and also to manage the process for all other plant that cannot be feasibly removed to a go-line.
- Refuelling at the same time as conducting a hot-seat changeover might appear convenient but should be recognised as a hazard.
- The second incident illustrates poor risk management and lack of understanding of the purpose and scope of a no-go zone. This lack of understanding permitted an inappropriate activity and put a person at risk, defeating the purpose of the go-line.

Recommendations:

1. That all potential hazards related to hot-seat changeovers, and their implications, be fully conveyed to operators through the mine's safety and health management system
2. That the use of go-lines be optimised
3. That the conduct of other activities nearby during a hot-seat changeover, particularly activities involving pedestrians, be recognised as having an unacceptable level of risk
4. That supervisors be trained, competent and accountable.

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