

## Safety Alert

# Dangers of unguarded machinery and plant

The purpose of this Safety Alert is to highlight the risk of serious or fatal injuries when working on or near unguarded machinery.

## Background

In late December 2020, a Territory cattle station worker failed to return after checking bores on the property. The worker was later found entangled in a bore pump with fatal injuries.

Preliminary findings indicate the workers clothing got caught in the bore pump's moving parts.

## Possible contributing factors

- The pump's pulley's and belt were unguarded exposing the worker to a number of hazards including entanglement, friction and abrasion hazards, when the pump was running.



**Image 1:** The pump's moving pulleys and belt unguarded, are a hazard for nearby workers. (Source: NT Police)

## Action required

- Owners and operators of machinery or items of plant must manage the hazards associated with a person coming into contact with the machine's moving parts.

- Isolating a machine's moving parts using guards is an option to reduce the risk of accidental contact.
- Guards are covers, casing or shields that create a physical barrier preventing a worker (or others), their clothing, personal protective equipment or other accessories from making contact with any moving part.
- Guards should be fitted to prevent contact with:
  - Rotating or moving parts;
  - Potential crush, shear or nip points on the machine; or
  - Parts of the machine which become very hot during normal operations.
- Guards should:
  - be of solid construction and securely mounted so as to resist impact or shock;
  - be difficult to by-passing or disable, whether deliberate or accidental;
  - only be altered or removed by the use of tools;
  - not create additional risks such as obstruct an operator visibility or reduce ventilation and cause overheating.
- If the guarded area needs access for maintenance or cleaning, install an interlocked physical barrier that allows access.
- Ensure safety procedures are in place, and understood, when workers have to conduct maintenance of the plant; and
- Ensure workers operating, or working near machines do not have ripped or loose items of clothing, hair, personal protective equipment or jewellery that may get caught.



**Image 2:** Two examples of bore pumps fitted with guards. (Source: Dept. of Environment Parks and Water Security)