



## Significant Incident Report No. 278

**Subject:** Trailer tarpaulin cover mechanism fracture - fatal accident

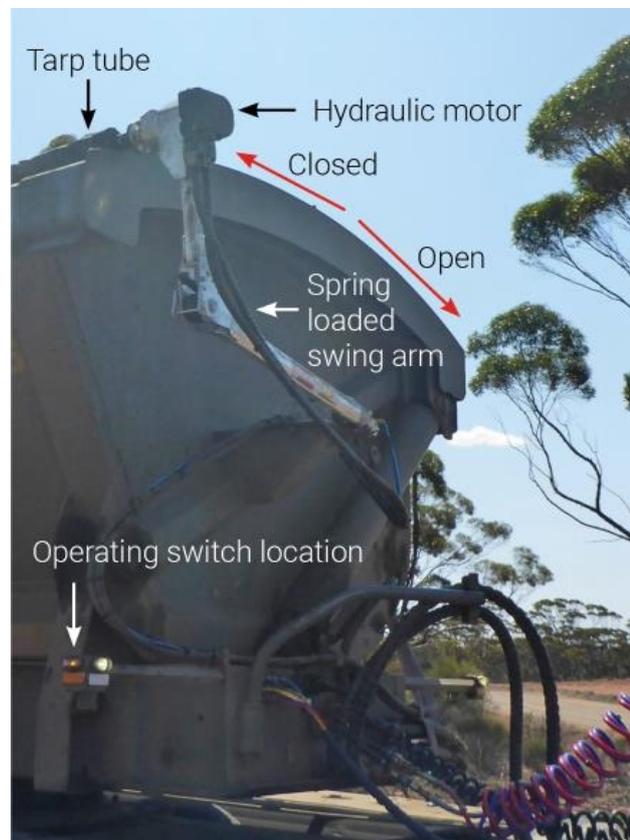
**Date:** 22 October 2019

### Summary of incident

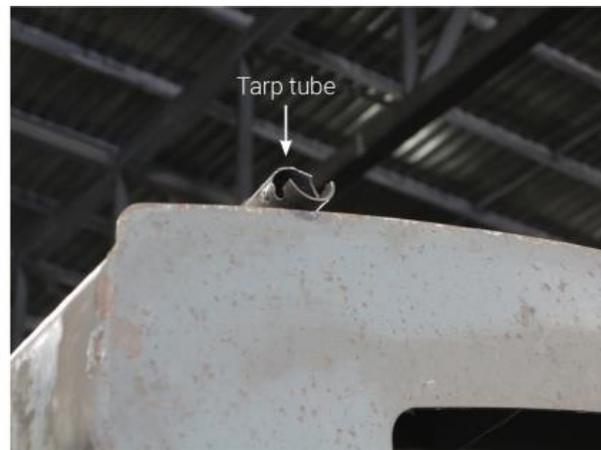
*Note: The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's investigation is ongoing. Information contained in the significant incident report is based on findings at the time of writing.*

On 11 September 2019, the mechanism used to open and close a tarpaulin cover on a triple road train trailer failed while a truck driver was in the process of closing the cover.

To close the cover, the tarpaulin cover is rolled from one side to the other over the top of the trailer while the tarpaulin tube (tarp tube) is rotated by a hydraulic motor located on the end of a spring loaded arm. As the cover approached the closed position on the top of the trailer, the tarp tube fractured. The combined tension and weight of the motor and spring arm caused the motor end of the arm to move through a downwards arc, ending up at the level of the cover operating switch at the front corner of the trailer. It appears this may have struck the truck driver who was found unconscious, and later died in hospital.



Road train trailer with swing arm attached to the tarp tube



L. Detached motor and swing arm from the tarp tube. R. Fractured end of tarp tube where motor and swing arm attach on tarpaulin covering system

## Direct causes

The operator was in the line of fire when the motor and swing arm became detached from the tarp tube.

## Contributory causes

- The operating switch for the tarpaulin cover was situated in a location that placed the operator in the line of fire when the tarp tube failed during operation of the covering mechanism.
- The tarp tube failed.

## Actions required

To prevent similar incidents occurring, the Department recommends the following actions.

- Conduct a risk assessment of trailer covering systems paying particular attention to the risk of an operator being exposed to hazards during opening and closing of the cover. Ensure all actions are implemented.
- Assess if the tarp roller operating switch is in a location that places the operator in the line of fire should a failure occur and implement controls to manage the risk.
- Ensure inspection and maintenance is carried out as required by the manufacturer or a competent person and all connection points are inspected.
- Ensure the trailer covers are being operated within design specifications.
- Promote hazard reporting and appropriate response to reduce the potential for inaction.

## Further information

Visit [www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety](http://www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety) for information on occupational safety and health in the resources sector.

This Significant Incident Report was approved for release by the State Mining Engineer on 22 October 2019