



Near miss involving ruptured pressure vessel at demolition site

Background

In early March 2020, a demolition team was taking down a large industrial unit. The team had removed fire suppression pipework from the roof and collected portable fire extinguishers from around the building.

The pipework was placed in a large pile while the fire extinguishers were put in a collection area away from other activities. One extinguisher was mixed in with the pipework.

An excavator operator was subsequently using a hydraulic shear attachment to cut the fire suppression pipe into sections by pulling lengths from the pile, cutting them and placing the cut sections to one side.

The operator did not see the pressurised fire extinguisher and cut it in half. The bottom section of the extinguisher travelled through the air and crashed through the roof of a warehouse approximately 300 metres away. It landed in a laydown area that was not being used at the time. No one was injured.

Following the incident, the demolition team instigated procedures to spread scrap material out rather than placing it in large piles.

Contributing factors

- The fire extinguisher had been mixed in with the fire suppression pipes, which were similar in colour and diameter.
- No system was in place to check scrap metal for pressure vessels.
- The fire extinguisher was a pressurised vessel.

Action required

1. Ensure that systems of work are in place to ensure pressurised vessels are not mixed with general scrap metal.
2. Ensure employees are trained to recognise pressurised vessels and the requirement to remove them from general scrap metal.
3. Ensure employees are aware of the consequences if pressurised vessels are ruptured.



Ruptured fire extinguisher recovered from site.

Further information

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety:

- [WorkSafe – Waste and recycling checklist](#)
- [More information about demolition](#)

A33369922

Regional Offices