Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

SHARP Safety & Health Assessment & Research for Prevention

Injured Young Worker Hazard Alert

Worker's Partially Amputated Fingers Spur Change in Well-drilling Procedures

Industry: Water and Sewer Line Construction
Task: Releasing Drill Brake

Release Date: September 26, 2011
Occupation: Laborer

A 24-year-old laborer's middle, ring, and pinky fingers of his right hand were partially amputated due to a crush injury involving well drilling equipment. The employee had worked approximately six months for a well drilling company and had received on the job training by 'shadowing' other workers. On the day of the injury, the worker climbed up onto the drill truck to release the latch that locked the boom holding the 2000 lb drill in place. After the latch was released, the boom immediately slid down crushing his fingers. The brake that keeps the boom in place after releasing the latch failed. After the incident, the employer created a new procedure and tool for completing this task. The new procedure and tool allows workers to release the latch without climbing up the drill truck; this will eliminate potential crushing as well as fall hazards. The employer believes this incident could have been prevented if more thought was given to the hazards associated with the task. According to the employer, his workers have a shown greater awareness of workplace safety since the incident. The worker had to retrain himself to do everyday tasks and suffered from post-injury depression.

Employee Recommendations

- Make sure you are properly trained on how to complete your job safely. Learn the potential hazards associated with your job, and how to minimize those hazards. Refuse to do work you have not been trained for or believe is unsafe.
- Share ideas on how to complete your job safer with your supervisor.
- All fail safe and back-up systems should be checked to ensure they are working properly before being used. If unsure how to check or use back-up systems, ask for help.

Employer Requirements and Recommendations

- Only permit employees qualified by training or experience to operate equipment. See WAC 296-155-035(2).
- Conduct a hazard analysis/risk assessment on all equipment that will be used during a project.
- When a workplace hazard is identified, follow these guidelines to address the hazard. In order of importance:
    1. Eliminate the hazard if possible.
    2. Substitute a safer alternative if the hazard cannot be eliminated.
    3. Design and engineer a safer machine or workplace.
    4. Design and employ safer work policies and practices.
    5. Use appropriate, hazard specific personal protective equipment.

Resources

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at: www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov
- L&I Job Safety Analysis Videos are available for loan at: https://fortress.wa.gov/lni/shrl/CatalogSearch.aspx?subjectID=58
- A sample worksheet for an oil and gas well drilling job safety analysis can be viewed at: http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/oilandgas/job_safety_analysis_sample_worksheet.html

Need more information?

Please contact Eric Jalonen, Prevention Specialist at 360-902-6751 or email Eric.Jalonen@Lni.wa.gov