

# Safety and health alert

## 09/96 Worker killed by reversing grader

### Incident

A 48 year old contract road worker was fatally injured whilst picking out debris from a freshly graded section of formed earthworks on the Perth to Busselton Highway, Binninup in November 1995.

A grader had completed ripping a stretch of gravel on a newly formed section of road and was reversing down the ungraded section to commence some more ripping. The driver turned from the adjacent smooth surface across to the newly ripped surface running over a person who was picking debris out of the gravel.

### Factors

- Restricted visibility to the rear of the graders cab due to engine size, air cleaner and exhaust location.
- Nearby road traffic noise, 20 knot winds and the presence of other earth moving equipment made hearing the graders engine noise and reversing alarm from up wind very difficult. Indeed, less than 5 metres upwind, the alarm could not be heard.
- An inadequate system of work to ensure plant operators are at all times aware of the location of persons working at ground level in the vicinity of mobile plant.

### Recommendations

1. Employers must ensure there is a system of work in place that provides adequate protection for employees who have to work on the ground in the vicinity of moving plant.
2. When mobile plant is being used people on foot in that area must be kept to an absolute minimum.
3. An effective system of communication and observation must be in place prior to, and during, the use of plant and heavy machinery.
4. Employees on the ground must be familiar with the blind spots of the plant working around them and be supervised adequately when undertaking work in the vicinity of mobile plant.
5. In times of strong winds and significant background noises, reversing alarms may not be adequate for persons on foot and upwind of operating plant.

### Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au), or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: [safety@docep.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@docep.wa.gov.au).

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