

Safety and health alert

04/00 Shunter injured whilst aligning buffers during shunting operation

Incident

An experienced shunter had a section of his right foot amputated as a result of a shunting operation at a Forrestfield distribution yard.

The shunter was counting down to the locomotive driver the distance from the incoming wagons to a stationary wagon and noticed that the incoming buffer (coupler) was out of alignment.

Instead of stopping the train to re-align the buffer, the employee kicked the incoming buffer while the wagon was slowly travelling towards him. The employee's right foot slipped and was crushed between the stationary and incoming buffers. He was wearing steel capped safety shoes.

Factors

1. Possible complacency about the dangers of working around moving trains.
2. Physical difficulties associated with aligning buffers during shunting operations.
3. Taking short cuts to eliminate the time to stop a train to realign buffers (in the process ignoring the safe procedures specified in the Shunters Training Manual).

Recommendations

1. Shunters should never attempt to re-align buffers (couplers) on a moving wagon, or on a stationary wagon about to be coupled to a moving wagon.
2. Shunters must ensure that if re-alignment of buffers is necessary, the incoming wagon is stopped at least 4 metres from the stationary buffer. The buffers should then be moved by either using an implement such as a lever, or by approaching from the side and moving the buffer to the central position by grasping the buffer underneath with the arms and then pushing.
3. Employers must provide adequate supervision, information and instruction to ensure safe systems of work are adopted during shunting procedures.

Further Information

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

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