

Safety and health alert

18/00 Scrap metal yard employee sustains fractures in both legs whilst oxy cutting

Incident

An employee received serious injuries to both legs when cutting a roll of hi-tensile steel wire with an oxy torch at a scrap metal recycling yard. The employee was standing outside the roll and cutting away from his body.

Factors

The hazard identification, risk assessment and risk control process was not followed in relation to the task, and no safe working procedure had been developed.

The wire was very stiff and had a considerable amount of stored energy inside.

When the strands of wire were cut, like a spring, the stored energy was released causing the wire to straighten out at velocity. The location and position of the employee in this case contributed to his injuries.

It is unlikely that any scrap yard would have the facilities necessary to safely process this product when coiled.

Recommendations

It is necessary to take all practicable steps to provide and maintain a working environment in which employees are not exposed to hazards.

1. Persons at workplaces should identify and determine if metal cutting tasks are undertaken at their workplace during which stored energy may be released.
2. Employers at workplaces where oxy-cutting of metal is carried out should review safe work procedures and conduct hazard identification refresher training in light of this incident.
3. This SIS should be communicated to all Safety & Health Representatives at relevant workplaces.

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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