

# Safety and health alert

## 15/03 Safety and health representative injured while investigating accident

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### Incident

In December 2002, an employee at a large food manufacturing organisation was injured when she caught her hand in an unguarded nip point between a conveyor and a roller system. The employee received crush injuries resulting in over a month's lost time.

At the commencement of the next shift when the safety and health representative for the work area started work she was informed of the injury. She discussed the incident with the supervisor and he asked her to wait a few minutes so they could investigate it together. However, before he returned, the safety and health representative located the conveyor/roller system, which had been unplugged and was not in use. She plugged it in and turned it on in an attempt to understand how the injury occurred. In doing so she placed a finger on the conveyor a short distance away from the nip point. The moving conveyor pulled her hand into the nip point and the safety and health representative sustained similar injuries to those of the person originally injured.

### Factors

1. The nip point was not guarded. Photographs show the guard placed over the nip point after the injuries. The first roller was also redesigned such that it will lift out under pressure.
2. The safety and health representative examined the plant while it was powered and operating.
3. The safety and health representative placed her hand adjacent to a potentially hazardous area while the plant was operating.

### Recommendations

1. Employers are required to identify hazards associated with plant, assess the risk of injury, and where practicable, implement appropriate controls to reduce the risk.
2. Any employee or employer involved in investigating an accident or near-miss must ensure they do not place their own safety or health at risk. Where practicable, plant should be stopped and all energy sources de-energised, isolated and locked out prior to inspection. Refer to [Regulation 4.37A](#) and the WorkSafe WA Commission's [Guidance Note: Isolation of Plant](#) [412k] for more information.
3. Safety and health representatives are required to co-operate with the employer on safety and health matters. Where management request an injury investigation be carried out jointly and without undue delay, it would be reasonable for the safety and health representative to co-operate with this request.

### 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).

A413335

Date: November 2003



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and Employment Protection  
Government of Western Australia

