

Safety and health alert

14/04 Truck driver killed when winching a sea container onto a tilt tray truck

Incident

A truck driver was killed while winching a 20-foot sea container onto an eight-wheel tilt tray truck fitted with a 13.60 tonne winch. At the time of the accident a two-legged chain sling was attached to the front end of the container and the winch rope. The winch was then used to draw the container onto the tray of the tilt tray truck. During this operation the front of the container lodged against the edge of the tilt tray, resulting in additional tension on the winch rope. The chain sling broke and the resultant release of energy caused the winch rope to whip back, striking the winch operator.

Factors

- The operator was working in the "danger zone" of the winch. The danger zone is described as an area directly in front of and within an arc of approximately 45 degrees each side as measured from the centre of the winch drum. This is the area the cable and any attachments could be "whipped " back to in the event of equipment failure.
- The winch rope and any attachments such as slings and hooks, were not capable of withstanding the maximum force that the winch could apply.

Recommendations

1. When selecting the winch rope and any attachments such as slings or hooks, employers must ensure the equipment selected is capable of withstanding the maximum force the winch can apply in normal operation.
2. Employers have a duty under section 19 of the Act to ensure adequate training in the safe operation of equipment before any operator is allowed to use the equipment. Training must include identification of the associated hazards and the safe working limits of the equipment they are using.
3. A competent person must inspect the slings, the winch cable and components on a regular basis.
4. The load being winched must be kept under constant observation, to ensure that any problems that may develop while winching is occurring are immediately recognised and dealt with.
5. Ensure the equipment in use is designed and appropriate for the work it is being used for.
6. Employers and employees inspect the operating parts of the winch and its associated components on a regular basis for damage and/or wear and tear, replacing worn or damaged parts as necessary.
7. Consideration should be given to the provision of remote controls for operation of the winch that would remove the operator from the danger zone of the winch.

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.

A412484

Date: September 2004

