

Safety and health alert

20/96 Young worker using an angle grinder

Incident

A fourteen-year-old worker was severely injured while operating an angle grinder at a manufacturing workshop in Wangara on his first day at work during November 1995.

The youth was in the process of changing the grinding wheel and accidentally activated the on/off switch. Power was still connected to the angle grinder.

The rotation of the wheel resulted in severe lacerations to 3 fingers on his left hand.

Factors

1. Adequate training to operate and change the grinding wheel had not been provided to the youth.
2. Direct supervision was not being provided to the young worker while operating the angle grinder.

Recommendations

1. Young inexperienced workers typically experience substantially higher work related lost time injuries and disease than the rest of the working population and therefore require:-
 - o planned induction into the workforce;
 - o careful instruction and training; and
 - o direct supervision.
2. Young inexperienced workers required to operate machinery should gradually be introduced to the working environment and not be required to operate particularly hazardous machinery on their first day.
3. Young and new workers require particularly close supervision and guidance until competency is demonstrated with each particular task.

The company was fined \$1000 for a breach of section 19(1)(b) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*.

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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