

Safety and health alert

03/00 Young worker injured by cardboard baling machine

Incident

In September 1999, a sixteen year old employee of a supermarket received an arm injury whilst loading boxes into a hydraulic cardboard baling machine. The metal pressure plate on the machine fell off onto the employee's arms.

Factors

1. The bolt holding the metal pressure plate on the cardboard baling machine had been loose for some time. No regular maintenance had been carried out on the machine in the nine years since it was purchased. The pressure plate had come loose on other occasions and at a previous time it had been welded to the hydraulic ram. However, the weld had cracked due to the movement of the pressure plate during the crushing process. The new employee had not been informed that the pressure plate and bolt had come loose previously.
2. The injured employee was new to the job and had received no induction or formal training on how to operate the cardboard baling machine and the hazards associated with it.
3. Despite being new to the job the employee was not directly supervised at any time during the use of the cardboard baling machine.

The door safety limit switch on the cardboard baling machine was inoperative due to cardboard found jammed into the limit switch at the time of inspection. Further investigation revealed this to be a common practice in the industry as it allows operators to open the top door during crushing and baling operations. The overriding of safety devices on cardboard baling machines is an unacceptable practice and must not be allowed.

Recommendations

1. Employers need to introduce a procedure to identify, assess and control hazards associated with plant.
2. Plant such as cardboard baling machines should receive regular routine maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's manual or the supplier's recommendations.
3. Develop a safe system of work for cardboard baling machine operators such as written work procedures based on the manufacturer's recommendations.
4. New employees must receive adequate instruction, training and appropriate supervision when using cardboard baling machines.
5. Practical guidance on safe design, operation and maintenance requirements for plant such as cardboard baling machines can be found in the new *Code of Practice for Safety and Health within the Waste Management and Recycling Industries* published by the West Australian Division of the Waste Management Association of Australia.



This document is an approved code of practice under Section 57 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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