

Safety and health alert

03/09 School student seriously injured at a workplace

Incident

A 16-year-old school student undergoing a Workplace Structured Learning Program at an engineering workplace had three fingers on his left hand severely crushed (two of these fingers have since been amputated). The student had been given the task of cutting off the ends from 50 pre-cut flat metal strips on a metal cutting guillotine. The person supervising the student had shown him what to do and, after observing the student cut the ends off four strips left him to complete the rest of the task on his own. The student had cut 47 strips and was in the process of cutting the 48th strip when he slipped, lost his balance and fell forward, inadvertently placing three fingers into the operational area of the machine. At this time the student accidentally activated the foot control, bringing the machine's clamping device down and crushing his fingers.

Factors to consider

- The machine was not suitably guarded to prevent contact with its moving parts
- The student had no prior experience operating a metal cutting guillotine
- The supervisor assumed the student had more experience within the industry than was the case

Recommendations

1. Persons in control of workplaces should ensure hazard identification and risk assessment are carried out within the workplace prior to a student commencing work related activities.
2. Persons in control of workplaces should ensure that moving parts of machinery that may cause injury are adequately guarded.
3. School authorities and persons in control of workplaces should effectively liaise to identify roles and responsibilities prior to starting a student within a workplace on a Workplace Structured Learning Program.
4. Persons who supervise students require sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to provide the information and level of control necessary to ensure the students health and safety.

Further information

- Refer to the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 and Regulations 1996
- Department of Education and Training Workplace Learning document 2006
- WorkSafe's internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au or customer service on 1300 307 877 or email safety@commerce.wa.gov.au

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