

INDUSTRY ALERT

INJURY

Millwright struck by stacker carriage suffers broken arm, shoulder injury

What happened?

A millwright with almost 20 years experience was pouring oil onto the hoist chain of a stacker, a machine that stacks the finished lumber in a sawmill. He was standing on a box that houses the hoist chain when he was struck by the stacker's carriage, a steel frame that carries lumber onto the hoist. The millwright suffered a fracture of the right upper arm bone and a large puncture wound in the shoulder area.

Why did it happen?

The stacker was operating at the time of the incident. The stacker operator could not see the millwright and did not know where the millwright was when the stacker's carriage struck him. An investigation of the incident found that there was no communication system in place to ensure that the stacker operator knew at all times when the millwright was working near the stacker. The investigation also concluded that other ways of oiling the stacker could have been used so that the millwright would not have had to work so close to moving parts.

How can it be prevented?

In certain circumstances, machinery has to be in motion in order for maintenance work to be done on it. It's extremely important in such circumstances that a well-established procedure be used to ensure communication between the machine's operator and the person responsible for doing the maintenance work. The operator must be aware at all times of the location of the person who is working near the machinery.

The ideal way to keep workers out of harm's way is to establish procedures and work processes that eliminate the necessity to work near a hazard. For example, an engineering control such as an automatic lubrication system would eliminate the need for the millwright to oil the stacker hoist chain at close quarters while the machine is operating.

If close contact between a maintenance person and machinery in operation is unavoidable, the employer's legal duty to take every precaution reasonable under the circumstances for the protection of a worker requires that procedures be established to ensure that the worker's safety is not compromised by his proximity to a machine.

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