

INDUSTRY ALERT

INJURY

Resaw operator's shoulder broken after shirt-tail is caught in rollers

What happened?

A resaw operator with four years experience was standing by the electrically driven rollers of an infeed table, guiding lumber into the resaw. The operator's shirt was unbuttoned and when he leaned over one of the rollers to reach for some lumber, his shirt-tail was grabbed by the roller. The operator's shirt and shoulder were drawn with such force that his shoulder bone was broken and the rollers' electric motor burned out.

Why did this happen?

Two main factors contributed to the resaw operator's critical injury:

1. The operator's shirt was unbuttoned and hanging loosely as he worked. He had been trained on resaw operating procedures and had received general safety training that included the hazards of loose clothing. No one realized that the electrically driven rollers of the infeed table were a potential source of entanglement. Resaw operators were allowed to work with their shirts unbuttoned.
2. The surface of the infeed table's rollers was slightly irregular in places due to axe marks caused by various attempts to remove ice and mud from boards before feeding them into the resaw. The irregular surface of the rollers increased the risk of entanglement for anyone who worked close to them.

How can it be prevented?

The least obvious hazards often pose the greatest risk to workers, because of a natural tendency to overlook or forget about them. Loose clothing, long hair, jewellery or other loose articles can become entangled in machinery and other moving parts, causing potentially devastating injuries. But being aware of this hazard is only the first step in preventing these injuries. Employers, supervisors and workers also need to identify all areas in the workplace where the hazard could arise.

Any axe marks or other surface irregularities on the infeed table's rollers should be smoothed down in order to reduce the chances of entanglement in the rollers. After the incident, free-wheeling rollers were installed to make it a safer, passive conveyor. Use of tear-away Velcro aprons by operators would also reduce the risk of entanglement.

The dangers of loose clothing and other entanglement hazards should be regularly emphasized to all workers in sawmills and veneer/plywood and other board mills.

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