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Issue Number 0111

Baler Fatality at Gaskells Waste Services

Background

It has been reported that on 23 December 2010, a 39-year old married dad-of-two from Poland suffered fatal injuries whilst operating a horizontal baler at a waste services plant. A Home Office post-mortem revealed the causes of death to be haemorrhaging, shock and severe traumatic injury to both legs.

The deceased was employed by Gaskells Waste Services, Bootle. Merseyside Police and the HSE are carrying out a joint investigation into the fatality. Until the investigation is completed, further details are not available.

Unconfirmed details of the incident

Unconfirmed media reports suggest that the deceased may have been trying to clear a blockage in the baling chamber. Whilst attempting to clear the blockage, the compactor ram cycled and crushed both his legs.

CPI Comment and Action

The information surrounding the fatality is very limited, therefore we are currently unable to establish, a more in depth description of the baler. Its mode of operation, layout of controls and current methods for safeguarding dangerous parts are unclear. In particular, it is not clear how access was obtained to the baler.

However, we do know that "Machines still kill people", and in the waste and recycling industries there is a history of baler related accidents, where a common feature is the failure to properly isolate and lock off power before carrying out any sort of work on machines.

Until all of the facts are known, all companies are strongly advised to review their current operating procedures. It is good industry practice for all companies to ensure that:

- A thorough 'task related' risk assessment is undertaken to identify **ALL** those tasks, including the infrequently performed ones, which could potentially involve working inside enclosures or removing/disturbing guards or safety devices. Include predictive human error types e.g. operator forgets to isolate a machine, or fails to follow a written procedure and ask what the worst foreseeable outcome would be if things went wrong.
- All necessary isolations are in place for both standard and non routine operations. This should include ensuring that equipment is isolated from the power, that there is no residual pressure in the system likely to cause any part of the equipment to move in such a way as to cause harm, and that moving parts have been secured as appropriate in order to prevent them from moving.
- All necessary guarding devices including fixed guards, interlocks and microswitches are in place and fully operational.
- Training arrangements are reviewed to ensure that all operators are fully trained and competent to complete the tasks expected of them. For employees whose first language is not English, ensure that all information is clear, communicated and

understood. Consider using a translation service. e.g. translating key health safety instructions into different languages, or using pictograms to illustrate good and bad practices.

- Any manual intervention is strictly controlled by an agreed SSoW and that measures are in place to monitor compliance. People need to be carefully trained in the procedure and supervised closely by a competent manager. Senior management must carry out regular checks to confirm the procedures are always followed;
- A permit to work system/isolation & lock out system is in operation and there use and application is monitored. Does your system of work require the supervisor/team leader to check to confirm that all sources of motive power have been isolated and the isolations secured before authorising the work?
- Adequate systems are in place to ensure that equipment is properly maintained.
- There are robust management arrangements, procedures and safe systems of work for ensuring safety of people involved in intervening with machines for tasks such as maintenance; running repairs; cleaning; and clearing blockages etc.

We should never operate "**one step from disaster**" by relying on only one line of defence, especially if that line of defence relies on, during the duration of the task a single human being getting it 100% right. 100% of the time.

Additional Information

The guidance in Sections 8 and 10 of '*Recover Paper Safely*', <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg392.pdf> which applies to all machines, is clear about risks and control measures, and is the **MINIMUM legal standard that you would be expected to apply** for working with balers.

Further HSE information

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l21.pdf>

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l22.pdf>

Guidance on permit to work systems

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg250.pdf>

Advice on Migrant Workers

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/migrantworkers/>