

Investigation information release

Date: December 2024

Worker suffers serious injuries while working under truck trailer

Incident date: 3 December 2024

Event: Worker suffers serious injuries while working under truck trailer

Location: Possum Brush Quarry, Possum Brush

Overview

A worker suffered multiple serious injuries when a truck trailer that he was working under rolled onto him.

The mine

Possum Brush Quarry is a hard rock quarry south of Taree on the Mid North Coast of NSW. The quarry has operated since 1987 and consists of extraction areas, a crushing and screening plant, workshops, weighbridge and administration areas. Access to the working area of the quarry is along its inbound access road, which slopes downward at a grade of about 5%. There are regular movements of road trucks and light vehicles along the inbound access road.

The task

A contract worker was tasked by his supervisor to drive a road-registered truck and trailer up the inbound access road to a laydown area. The truck configuration was an Isuzu 3 axle rigid with a dual axle, double-wheeled trailer. The front nearside wheelset of the trailer was locked on and was being dragged along the bitumen road surface as the truck travelled up the inbound haul road. The worker stopped the truck on the haul road and the quarry's manager entered the cabin to try and release the locked trailer brake. The quarry manager drove the truck a short distance but was unable to release the brake. He parked the truck on the side of the roadway and asked the quarry's mechanic to attend the location to release the trailer's brakes.

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Figure 1: The truck and trailer involved in the incident



The incident

The mechanic arrived and parked his Toyota Hilux utility a short distance behind the trailer. Wheel chocks were placed behind the rear wheels of the trailer. The mechanic used a two-way radio to communicate with the quarry manager who was initially in the driver's seat of the truck. The mechanic accessed the area underneath the trailer to rectify the brake issue. The truck was moved a short distance to determine if the issue had been rectified. The brake remained locked and the truck was parked on the side of the road again.

The quarry manager exited the truck cabin and the mechanic continued to work underneath the trailer. The truck's park brake was in the off position.

The truck and trailer rolled backwards a short distance (less than 10 metres) while the mechanic was under the trailer. The trailer collided with the utility parked behind it. The force of the impact forced the utility back several metres before the truck, trailer and the utility came to a stop.

The mechanic was impacted by part of the trailer's axle assembly. One of his legs was trapped between the trailer's front nearside inner wheel and the torsion bar.

Quarry workers responded to the emergency. A jack was used to raise the trailer so that the nearside wheels could be removed, thereby releasing the mechanic. First aid was rendered and emergency services attended the scene.

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Figure 2: The position of the vehicles following the incident



Figure 3: Collision between the trailer and the utility



The mechanic was airlifted to John Hunter Hospital where he was admitted. He was treated for injuries to his collarbone, ribs, pelvis and leg - which included surgery.

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The investigation

The Resources Regulator has commenced an investigation to determine the cause and circumstances of the incident that will explore, among other things, the:

- systems of work at the quarry for mechanical repairs
- operation and maintenance of the mobile plant involved in the incident
- instruction, training and supervision provided to workers concerning the task and the mobile plant that was involved
- adequacy of risk assessments, work procedures and work instructions for the task
- adequacy of the quarry operator's safety management system.

The mine operator and other parties are assisting with the investigation. A report will be published when the investigation is concluded.

Safety information

Uncontrolled mobile plant movement is a known risk to the safety of workers who undertake maintenance and repairs.

Mine operators and contractors are reminded of their duty to identify hazards and manage risks to health and safety in accordance with the provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013* and associated Regulations.

In particular, mine operators and contractors must:

- ensure that mobile plant is regularly inspected and maintained
- identify and manage the risks associated with uncontrolled mobile plant movements
- supervise workers to ensure that controls are effectively implemented and followed
- develop and implement safe systems of work for undertaking mobile plant repairs and maintenance, loading and unloading vehicles, parking on uneven ground and coupling trailers
- regularly review the effectiveness of implemented control systems for uncontrolled vehicle movements
- consider implementing appropriate engineering controls on mobile plant which mitigate the risk of uncontrolled vehicle movements e.g. seat sensor interlocked brakes
- ensure that adequate information, training, instruction¹ and supervision is provided to workers who operate and repair mobile plant, including information about:
 - actions that may cause braking systems to release
 - identifying hazards and controlling risks associated with the uncontrolled movement of vehicles.

Workers are reminded of their duty to take care for their own health and safety and that of their co-workers. They must also comply, as far as they are reasonably able, with the mine's work instructions, policy and procedures to ensure worker safety and compliance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and related legislation. In particular workers must:

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- park heavy vehicles on level ground
- apply the handbrake properly before getting out of a vehicle
- know how to use heavy vehicle safety features, such as handbrake warning systems
- use wheel chocks

Further information

Please refer to the following guidance materials:

- [Mining Design Guideline 15 - Mobile and transportable plant for use on mines and petroleum sites](#)
- [Safe Work Australia - Workplace traffic management guidance material](#)
- [SafeWork NSW - Uncontrolled movement of vehicles safety alert](#)
- [SafeWork NSW - A guide to work health and safety in the road freight transport industry](#)
- [SafeWork NSW – Vehicle immobilisation](#)

About this information release

The Regulator has issued this information to draw attention to the occurrence of a serious incident in the mining industry. Further information may be published as it becomes available.

Visit our [website](#) to:

- learn more about our work on causal investigations and emergency response
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¹ <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/safety-alerts/safety-alerts/immobilising-heavy-vehicles-and-trailers>