



# SAFETY ALERT

## INJURY TO EXCAVATOR OPERATOR

### INCIDENT

An excavator operator sustained serious lacerations to his lower leg when the end of a 6 m \* 300mm timber pole entered the cabin of his machine.

### CIRCUMSTANCES

The excavator operator was mining fill sand when he uncovered two timber poles, which had been left in overburden material from previous clearing operations.

After sorting the timber from the overburden the operator decided to lift the poles into the back of a dump truck for removal. Using a conventional mud bucket, the poles were lifted above the height of the operator's cabin.

As the excavator slewed towards the truck, both poles dislodged. One pole fell to the ground, while the other speared into the operator's cabin.



**Direction of the pole**



**Poles final resting place**

The pole lodged against the track controls, driving the machine forward. This resulted in the pole jamming across the operator's leg and into the access door. It was not able to be determined whether evasive action by the operator knocked the slew control or whether the end of the pole came into contact with the lever. Fortunately the cabin rotated to the left and the pole was released.

## **INVESTIGATION**

An investigation of the incident found that:

- The operating conditions, weather and visibility were not considered to have contributed to the incident.
- The excavator was well maintained and performed its functions as per design, however the absence of a log grab contributed to the incident.
- A log grab for the excavator was owned by the company, but was not available on site.
- Documented work procedures were in place for general earthmoving activities.
- Accepted work practices had been established for the removal of nuisance timber in the overburden.
- The event consisted of a change from normal work practises.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Review risk assessments and safe work procedures to ensure that all-potential hazards associated with earthmoving have been identified and controlled.

Reinforce systems that identify change from accepted work practices, ensuring additional hazards are controlled.

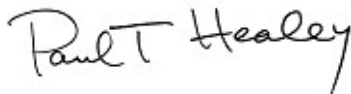
Ensure that fit for purpose equipment is available on site and is used when activities differ from core earthmoving work.

Review the adequacy of windscreen protective devices where materials are handled that have the potential to be propelled towards the cabin.

Inform the workforce of the hazards associated with lifting and lowering awkward shaped material.

Ensure adequate training, supervision and task observation for compliance with earthmoving standards.

Signed



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