

Contractor Severs Fingers on Conveyor Belt

WHAT HAPPENED

The team of 4 contractors had completed their set task of digging out the tail-end of a clay transport belt conveyor. All of the guarding had been replaced and the equipment re-energised so the team could check how the belt was running and tracking.

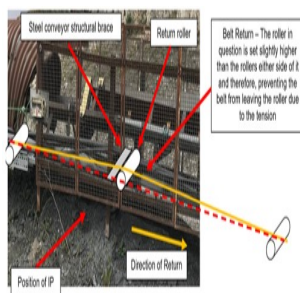
One of the contractors notice a flapper (small strip of belting) hanging from the edge of the belt as it was running. The contractor knelt down and reached underneath the guard grabbing the flapper, believing that it would snap off. Instead it pulled his hand over a return roller with the belt trapping it. As he pulled his hand back the 3rd & 4th fingers of his right hand were degloved to the first knuckle.

To enable the wound to be closed with sufficient skin, the hospital's surgeon had to amputate the two fingers between the 1st and 2nd knuckles.

KEY FINDINGS

- Original task was completed according to procedures including isolation, Risk Assessment and Method Statement and Worksafe.

- The Safety Inspections, VFL's and training reports were all up to date.
- Emergency response plan was followed.
- The roller was set slightly higher than the two either side of it, causing additional tension on the belt so it could not lift from the roller.
- Due to the above, to meet British Standards, the guard should have been slightly larger; however this would not have prevented the injury.
- The contractor had worked on the site for 10 years.



LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

HOW COULD THIS HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

- Guarding fully extended to the ground.
- Follow site rules and never attempt to touch a piece of moving equipment.

REVIEW POINTS

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- Are return rollers inspected, checking that the belt can easily yield 50mm from the roller?
- Where the belt cannot yield 50mm from the roller, is there sufficient guarding in place to ensure that the trapping point cannot be reached?
- Is there a Safe System of Work for conveyor belt maintenance and removal of flappers and are they communicated to the workforce?
- Have employees received the STOP-THINK-ACT training helping them to identify hazards, and keep out of the line of fire?
- Is everyone encouraged to STEP IN if they see any unsafe acts on our sites?

(Editor's Note) Incidents involving conveyor belts occur all too frequently and consequently a range of resources are being produced by 'the Fatal 6' Contact with moving machinery and Isolation Working Group – these can be found on the following safequarry webpage
<https://www.safequarry.com/Fatal-6/Fatal-6-Step-1.aspx>

LOCATION: OTHER
ACTIVITY: MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING
SUB ACTIVITY: N/A

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