Inadvertent operation of excavator controls

WHAT HAPPENED

A 360degree Leibherr excavator was being used to lift a breaker point out of a van. The excavator operator climbed back into the cab with his overalls tied around his waist. He sat down unaware that the left hand slewing lever was caught in the pocket of his overalls. He started the engine and disengaged the safety lever. The machine immediately slewed left and hit the van. Fortunately, two operatives were standing on the opposite side of the van when it was hit, so there were no injuries. In other circumstances, this could have been a double fatality. In similar fashion to previous incidents in the construction industry, lifting was involved and pedestrians had entered the working zone (reach) of the excavator.

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

A) The excavator must be turned off when the driver exits the cab.

B) The excavator driver must ensure that all pedestrians are clear of the operating reach of the excavator, before starting it up.

Manufacturers need to improve the electronic safety controls by:

* Having a sensor in the seat that automatically turns the machine off when the driver leaves his seat.

* Having a sensor that will not allow the safety bar (dead man’s handle) to release if one of the operating levers is snagged.

* Having a sensor that will not allow the machine to work unless both operating levers are being used.

* Design of safety bar (dead man’s handle) to be reviewed urgently. Industry to discuss and agree a technical standard to ensure safety and consistency.

LOCATION:	**QUARRY**	**ALERT STATUS:**	**Normal**
ACTIVITY:	**PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING**	**DATE ISSUED:**	**31/10/2012**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**AGGREGATE PROCESSING**	**INCIDENT No:**	**00344**