

Slips, trips and falls - Employee sustains ankle injury whilst water jetting at in the pre-heater tower at a cement plant

WHAT HAPPENED

During routine water jetting in the pre-heater tower (PHT), an employee mis-stepped while moving backwards during water jetting, causing his right foot to step into the gap beyond the walkway kickboard. This led him to momentarily lose balance and roll his left ankle. The gap, located between the walkway and the chalk riser duct, measured 18cm and was obviously never large enough for a person to fall through.

The duct's structural flange acts as a natural handrail, guiding individuals away from the gap when adjacent to it. On typical walkways, protected by a handrail, stepping beyond the kickboard often exposes workers to much larger gaps and fall potential. The kick board met the required height and complied with both British and Cemex Standards.

A precautionary x-ray revealed a small bone fracture in his ankle. His ankle was not placed in a cast, and to facilitate a speedy recovery, he remained on shift with modified duties.

KEY FINDINGS

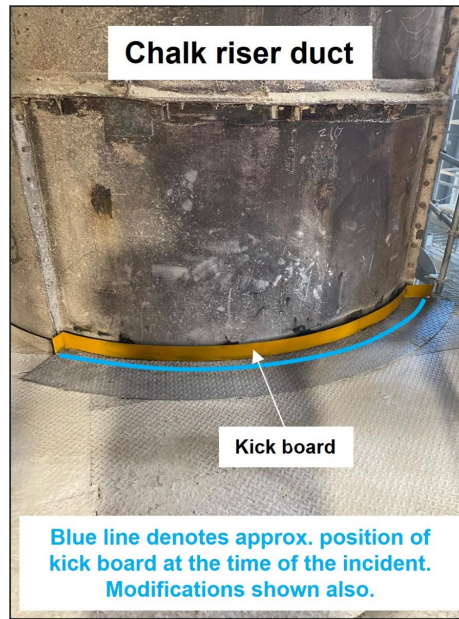
Safe Systems - The SSOW was up to date and was reviewed in the second half of 2024.

Competency

- The injured person (IP) was fully trained and certified to carry out the task. He was carrying out the task with his colleague.
- The IP received external independent re-training on water jetting during November 2024. He has many years of experience.
- 169 VFLs were conducted in the PHT in 2024, with a significant proportion focusing on water jetting and Cardox activities. The IP was last observed during a VFL in late December 2024.

PPE - All required PPE was worn, in compliance with the Safe System of Work (SSOW).

Standards - In 2024, the PHT underwent multiple independent Health & Safety inspections, as it has at least annually in previous years. These inspections were carried out by the UK H&S team, and in 2024, the Corporate Governance Audit team also conducted an inspection of the PHT. These compliment the frequent inspections by site staff. No issues in this area had been identified.



LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

- Water jetting is an activity that does require the operator to step backwards. Where feasible, ensure the area behind is of sufficient space and free of any structures.
- The restricted space on the working platform, a result of the PHT's design (including the routing of ducts), is a contributing factor. To improve the area, the kick board has been moved slightly closer to the duct – see below. Note: the gap cannot be closed completely, and therefore the kick board must remain in order to allow for thermal expansion – the duct runs hot due to process conditions.

LOCATION: CEMENT PLANT
ACTIVITY: MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING
SUB ACTIVITY: WALKWAYS

ALERT STATUS: Normal
DATE ISSUED: 25/11/2025 18:46:49
INCIDENT No: 04949