Machines in Motion Mean Danger



Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE

It's a simple fact: Machines need to move to perform their tasks. Whether it's a conveyor belt carrying raw material to a mixing tank, power presses bending sheet metal or a drill press punching holes in a piece of wood, they all operate by movements that cause a serious risk to workers.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

The risks occur because workers sometimes put their hands or other body parts in the point of operation, get caught in between two moving parts or fail to use proper safety procedures to clear a jammed machine. Not a day goes by when someone isn't killed by moving machinery or suffers a serious injury like an amputation because they got too close or didn't follow basic safety procedures.

EXAMPLE

The CEO and the pressroom manager of a California printing company have been charged with manslaughter in connection with the death of a pregnant worker. She was crushed by a machine that suddenly turned on as she was reaching into it. Prosecutors claim that the woman had not been properly trained to operate the machine and the machine was not equipped with proper safety devices.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Even properly guarded machines are dangerous to operate, so it's important to recognize and avoid hazardous machine actions and follow the written safe work practices provided for your machinery.

Here are a dozen basic machinery safety tips:

1. Only operate machinery if you've successfully completed the required training and are authorized to do so.
2. Know how to stop the machinery before you start it.
3. Check to see if the area around the machine is tidy and free of obstructions.
4. Wear the required personal protective equipment (PPE), such as safety footwear and eyewear.
5. Do not wear loose items including gloves, dangling chains, rings or unrestrained long hair. These could get caught in the moving parts and pull you in.

6. Make sure all machine guards are fitted correctly and securely, and are maintained in good working order.
7. Do not remove or disable machine guards, unless the machine requires repair or maintenance, you are authorized to conduct those repairs or maintenance AND the proper lockout-tagout procedures are followed.
8. Never attempt to start a machine that has a lockout tag on it.
9. Before using the machine, first ensure that it’s working properly. Inform your supervisor if you discover any problems.
10. If the machine malfunctions while you are operating it, report the problem immediately to your supervisor and do not continue to use the machine until it has been inspected and determined safe to operate.
11. Never place your hands or any other body part in the point of operation or other moving part of the machine in order to clear a jam.
12. If you’re not operating machinery, then stay clear of the area when machines are running. Never enter the immediate work area unless you establish eye or verbal contact with the operator.

FINAL WORD

Workplace machinery is often fast and powerful. It’s strong enough to bend, cut, crush and otherwise mutilate wood, metal, glass, plastic and other materials. The human body is no match. Learn the hazards and follow the safety procedures.