Fatal 5 - Operator hit by small media ball injuring tooth

WHAT HAPPENED

A contractor was in the vicinity of media ball grading activities at a Cement Plant when a small media ball was displaced whilst cleaning and contacted one of his front incisor teeth. This tooth was subsequently cracked. He continued to work on site with no restrictions; however, following a dental visit and a review of reporting requirements, it has been determined that this incident falls into the category of a medical treatment case.

INCIDENT FACTS

- The IP (injured person) was engaged in fork truck duties moving media barrels.
- Another employee was cleaning the media grading machine.
- The IP had finished moving the media barrels and disembarked from the fork truck.
- The IP walked over to the vicinity of the media grading machine.
- Whilst the cleaning operation was being undertaken, a trapped media ball fell through the chute and contacted the hammer being used, expelling it from the chute in the direction of the contractor who was passing by, around 8ft away.
- The small media ball hit the IP in the mouth, causing a crack to the tooth.
- The IP reported the incident.

The image above shows a reconstruction of the operators positioning at time of incident, they were **2.5 metres** apart. Access to the area was being controlled. .

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

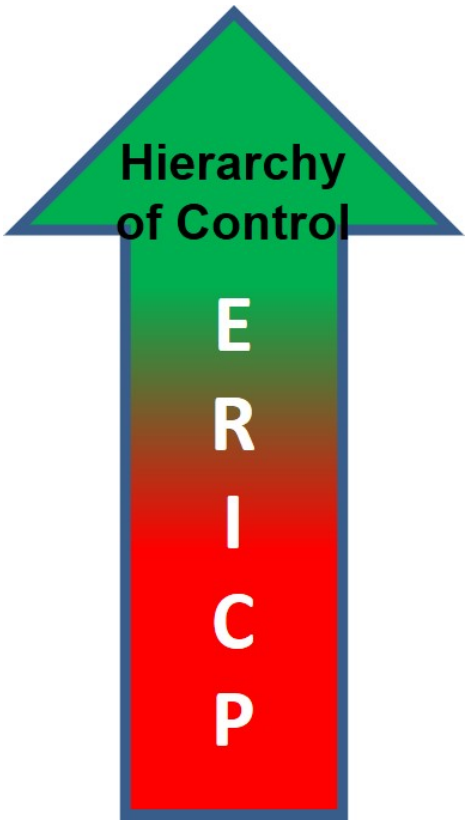
HOW COULD THIS HAVE BEEN AVOIDED

Although the likelihood of this incident occurring was extremely low, it is acknowledged that space constraints on site and the design of the media grader could impact its operation during wet weather (as the task is completed outdoors). The UK experienced the wettest weather in decades during the week in question. Consequently, cement accumulated on the discharge chutes, and the operator had to break it up by tapping a hammer on the coating. This action led to a trapped media ball falling through the chute and making unexpected contact with the hammer, causing it to be expelled from the chute towards the contractor.

To address this issue, newer grading machines with improved designs, less susceptible to material buildup during adverse weather conditions, will be hired for future use.

Adhering to the ERIC-P principle, this change in equipment is expected to eliminate or significantly reduce the potential for a similar occurrence.

ERIC-P Eliminate, Reduce, Isolate, Control, Protect.



LOCATION:	**CEMENT PLANT**	**ALERT STATUS:**	**Normal**
ACTIVITY:	**MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING**	**DATE ISSUED:**	**03/04/2024 16:14:39**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**MILLS**	**INCIDENT No:**	**03704**