

Contractor Head Crush Injury

WHAT HAPPENED

A contract vacuum tanker driver had been told to report to his Supervisor; the driver had recently been recruited by the contract company and was undergoing a formal induction programme.

The Supervisor was in the process of tipping out a Renvac unit. As he approached the machine, the driver could not see his Supervisor, so went around to the rear of the vehicle. At the same time, the Supervisor moved around from the rear of the vehicle to the opposite side and started to lower the rear door using the remote control unit.

For some reason the contract driver leant into the back of the unit to peer inside. His head was trapped between the vehicle body and door as it closed, crushing it. The door is lowered on double acting rams, and takes about 5 seconds to close completely. The contractor driver's helmet shows signs of impact damage; he suffered fractures to his skull, eye socket and jaw, along with a bleed to the brain.



The contractor driver's head was caught in here

LEARNING POINTS / ACTIONS TAKEN

LEARNING POINTS

- The contractor was in his first week on the job. Are assessments undertaken to determine what activities new / inexperienced personnel can / cannot undertake and the level of supervision required? Are formal induction programmes drawn up to ensure that new / inexperienced personnel are not put in danger by being exposed to activities beyond their competence?
- The remote control unit is connected to the vehicle via a 7m long cable to allow the operator to have a clear view across the rear of the vehicle when operating the rear door; an earlier risk assessment stipulated standing to the side when tipping, but didn't mention closing of the hatch. Do we ensure our risk assessments, method statements and safe systems of work detail safety critical requirements? Do Supervisors and Operators understand the safe methods of work? Are working practices monitored to ensure they are safe, effective and followed?
- The contractor's helmet took some of the force of the impact and may well have saved his life. Do we always insist on the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE), even in open areas where no hazard is immediately apparent?

LOCATION: CEMENT PLANT
ACTIVITY: MAINTENANCE & HOUSEKEEPING
SUB ACTIVITY: N/A

ALERT STATUS: Normal
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