

Deadly Mistakes

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Fatal Event: On April 10, 2016, a 42-year-old man was standing on the forks of a forklift and working on the fly wheel of a perforating press when the fly wheel fell off the press crushing the employee between the fly wheel and the forks of the fork lift.

Investigative Findings: A maintenance supervisor (deceased) and a mechanic had been performing maintenance on a Wegner perforating press. A portion of the periodic maintenance was replacing the bearings which required the removal and replacement of the flywheel. During the testing of the machine the clutch kept breaking the plates. It was determined that additional space was needed in the bearings for the machine to function properly. The employees decided to adjust the spacers without removing the flywheel from the press. The maintenance supervisor climbed up to the top of a 6 foot step ladder and then onto the elevated forks of a Toyota forklift. The forks were raised up so that the supervisor could reach the flywheel. He then proceeded to remove the locking nut from the fly wheel so that he could access the bearings. While he was removing the spacers from the bearings the 4,700 pound flywheel fell off the press and onto the maintenance supervisor where he was crushed against the forks of the fork lift.

Discussion: On interview with key regional operations staff for the company it was determined that there was an unwritten procedure for this particular routine maintenance of the flywheel. When the maintenance was conducted the flywheel was supposed to be lifted by the fork lift and then chained to the top of the machine to secure it against falling. After it was secured the locking nut would be removed and the maintenance safely performed. Management told investigators that they assumed all maintenance supervisors followed the identical procedures. The mechanics training records, for the fork lift, showed that he was trained and qualified. During an interview the mechanic stated that he knew that the forks should not be used for lifting someone but that the maintenance was a simple task that could be done quickly so they decided to go ahead. He also indicated that they had a manbasket on the premises for lifting personnel but decided not to use it.

Recommendations:

- A hazard assessment should be performed for each job duty.
- Safe work practices should be established and communicated to employees.
- Employers should provide employees with a training program that describes the hazards associated with servicing equipment and all the step by step instructions and safety precautions needed to do the task safely.
- Maintenance procedures for specific equipment should be documented.
- Employees should not perform any service or maintenance on machinery that is not locked out or tagged out.
- Employers must provide training to ensure that employees are aware of the purpose and function of an energy control program.
- Don't take shortcuts or ignore the safety and health procedures that have been put in place.
- Safety rules should be enforced.