

21 January, 2008

INDUSTRY ALERT

Automatic Stacker

On the 17th of January, 2008 an employee was fatally injured after a structural collapse during the clearing of a timber blockage in a planing mill at a softwood processing facility.

Brief description of activity leading to incident.

A risk assessment has been conducted, and from this risk assessment a series of controls have been developed. These have been divided into short, medium and long term control measures. The short term controls must be implemented before WorkSafe will consider rescinding the Prohibition Notice. The medium and long term controls must then be addressed.

To assist the further processing sector in the immediate future, please find set out below the short term controls. They have been reviewed by WorkSafe:

Short Term Control Measures – Automatic Stacker

1. Conduct maintenance work to the rear doors of the dryer section to enable the doors to be fixed in the closed position with a controlled lock. The purpose of these actions is to negate access to the nip hazards located at the rear of the dryer section. This is to be considered a short term solution, as the access to the rear of the dryer section is required for preventative maintenance of bearings and other components. Further guarding will be required.
2. Audio/visual pre-start warning device should be fitted to the plant to provide cues to operators on the impending start up or energizing of the plant. This action is to provide the opportunity for people working outside the direct line of sight of the operator, to remove themselves from the machine or not place themselves near the machine. This is in line with the related standard AS:1755 regarding the design and operational safety requirements of conveyor systems.

WorkSafe have indicated that once the appropriate control measures have been implemented, they will be viewed as the current state of knowledge regarding automatic stacker hazards and it is anticipated they will become a minimum industry standard.

It is also anticipated that guarding of a similar standard may be required at other points in the timber processing chain. Again, short term controls may be required in the immediate future to ensure all operations are safe.

WorkSafe Victoria is currently conducting investigations into the incident and the company are also commencing investigations to identify the root cause and prevent a reoccurrence.

Additional information will be provided to you as it becomes available.

For further information please contact:

Jane Calvert
State Secretary, Victorian Branch
CFMEU Forestry & Furnishing Products Division
0419 346 531

Denise Campbell-Burns
National Coordinator
OHS&E Unit
0419 591 181