



ACCIDENT/INCIDENT ALERT

No. 24, March 2007

Hand Trapped in Ridger Accident

Incident

A young worker, aged thirteen, trapped his hand in an unguarded nip point between gear wheels on a Willett R205 Ridger. He was fortunate that his injuries (lacerations and bruising) were not more severe.



Photo 1: View of the ridger from the rear

Photo 1 above shows the rear view of the ridger where the young worker was standing. The blue arrow points to the working platform and the red circle indicates the point where the worker was trapped in the gear wheels. Such open gear drives are also common on grain and grass seed drills and these should also be guarded.

Circumstances

In 2006 a thirteen-year-old person was engaged by a farmer to help him sow seed using a ridger. The young worker was on school holidays and comes from a farming background. His parents were friends of the farmer and aware of the task that their son was to perform. He was to stand on a working platform on the back of the ridger to ensure that seed flowed evenly and consistently into the ground.

Investigation

The presence of young workers

The investigation identified that the worker was thirteen years old. This was the second accident within this region within two years where a young person has been injured by a ridger's exposed gear wheel nip points.

The Health and Safety in Employment Regulations 1995 (regulations 54 to 61) set out duties in relation to young persons. These regulations specify the circumstances in which young persons can work with tractors. Regulation 57 specifies that every employer shall ensure that no employee under the age of 15 years drives a tractor or rides upon the vehicle while drawing any implement or while any implement is attached to it. This includes riding upon any implement other than a sled or trailer designed and adapted for that purpose.

In essence, young persons under the age of 15 shall not be employed to ride on ridgers. There is an exemption for young people between the age of 12 and 15 who can undertake this work, but not for gain or reward. This only applies, however, to agricultural work and is conditional on the young person either being fully trained or in the act of receiving training in the safe operation of the tractor, and the safe use of any implement that is being drawn by or is attached to the tractor.

According to the regulations, the thirteen-year-old worker should not have been allowed to work on the ridger.

Was the ridger safe to use?

The ridger had exposed gear wheels with an in-running nip point. Exposed hazards on transmission machinery should be isolated so that no person can come in contact with it, risking a serious injury.



Photo 2: in-running nip point on ridger



Photo 3: Possible guarding solution
(Visible gear wheels are not in use)

Recommendations

1. Young people under the age of 15 should not be employed to ride on ridgers.
2. All exposed mechanical hazards should be adequately isolated so that they cannot harm a person of any age.