

Excavator Counterweight Strikes Worker

Safety Alert

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Enform

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Description of Incident:

While an operator was performing excavation operations, a co-worker moved to the edge of the ditch to observe the work progress. The worker inadvertently placed himself in the excavator's swing pivot zone and the operator's blind spot. The worker did not effectively communicate his intentions to the operator and did not confirm that they were understood. When the excavator operator removed the bucket of dirt and pivoted, the counterweights of the excavator struck the worker's shoulder. The worker fell approximately 1.5 meters into the ditch and then rolled approximately 1.5 meters onto the exposed pipeline. Despite the high potential for significant injury, the actual consequence was less significant with the worker suffering a scrape to his forehead.



Excavator and Injured Worker Position (re-enactment)

What Caused It?

The worker stepped into the excavator's 10 meters (30') swing pivot zone.

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Contributing Factors Included:

- Failure to identify hazard/lack of situational awareness
- Not following procedures
- Poor communication and planning

Corrective/Preventative Actions:

- Within 10 meters (30') of operating equipment (or greater depending on the operating reach of the equipment), prior to entering, personnel must first have their intentions verified as understood and accepted by the equipment operator
- As part of the Operator Competency Checklist, operators must idle down and lower all ground engaging tools if personnel, vehicles or other equipment encroach within 10 meters (30') of operating equipment
- Equipment approach procedures and operator blind spots for equipment must be reviewed during the Field Level Hazard Assessment (FLHA) before work starts
- Use a spotter when operating equipment in congested/restricted areas

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