

Serious hand injury during use of deck scaler

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A member has reported an incident in which a crew member sustained a serious hand injury while using an air driven deck scaler during maintenance operations on deck.

What happened?

The crew member was wiping clean an area on the scaler to the rear of the motor when his glove became entangled in the drive belt and his fingers were subsequently trapped. The crewman sustained crush injuries to the tips of two fingers, and was medevaced for treatment and subsequent surgery. Fortunately no amputation resulted.



deck scaling machine

*Point where IP's
glove became
entangled*



deck scaling machine showing where person's glove was caught

What were the causes?

Investigation of the incident noted that:

- The deck scaling machine had no 'dead man' type control.
- The physical barrier to injury offered by the installed guards on the deck scaler was defeated.
- Existing company procedures for the use of this air-driven device clearly state 'disconnect airline before any troubleshooting or maintenance'.

The incident highlighted:

- a design deficiency in the deck scaling machine
- a failure to follow basic safe working practices.

Actions

The following actions were implemented:

- Further use of machines of this type was prevented until the suitability of appropriate control measures could be demonstrated; these include:
 - 'hard' barriers such as guarding and a dead man switch, and

- 'soft' barriers such as risk assessment and operating instructions.
- Further equipment was identified which may present a similar risk (guarding/dead man switch), i.e. drilling machines, lathes, bench grinders, etc. and actions identified which would appropriately manage the risk.

The manufacturer of the deck scaler was contacted to feedback concerns and highlight the lack of a 'dead man' switch on the device, and a swift and positive response was received from the manufacturer.

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