

Stored energy – Worker scalded when hot ash dropped into water

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The UK HSE reports that a company was fined after a worker received severe burns to his upper body and face.

What happened?

The incident occurred when a worker was attempting to dislodge a blockage in an energy-from-waste furnace at a recycling plant.

The injured person opened two hatches on a chute which took burnt waste away. He used a metal pole to dislodge the blockage. In doing so the waste dropped into a pit filled with water and a plume of hot ash and steam erupted from the hatches causing severe burns to his upper body and face as he turned to escape.

What went wrong? What were the causes?

The UK HSE investigation found that there was inadequate consideration or assessment of the risk to which workers were exposed during this task. This meant the system of work they had wasn't sufficient to stop the incident happening.

It was also found that the company failed to implement appropriate systems to manage and supervise this workplace activity. This meant the limited measures they had put in place were not followed.

The UK HSE inspector observed that it was essential that companies recognise and understand problems and put procedures in place to prevent them from happening, and introduce engineering controls and systems of work that prevent people being injured.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Bypassing safety controls



Energy isolation

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