

Two cases of hand injuries – UK HSE

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IMCA members continue to report significant numbers of hand and finger injuries. Here we discuss two such incidents recently reported by the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

IOGP Life Saving Rules:



Line of fire

Incident 1: Worker Injures Hand on Lathe

What happened

THE UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE) reports that an engineering firm was sentenced after a worker suffered injuries to his hand. A worker was polishing a metal shaft on a lathe using emery cloth, while wearing gloves. The glove appeared to snag and dragged his hand towards the rotating shaft. As a result of the incident he had stitches in his hand and dislocated his scaphoid bone – part of his wrist.

What went wrong/causes

The injured person had only been working for four days at the site.

The HSE investigation found that:

- No suitable and sufficient assessments had been carried out to determine control measures for this task of polishing.
- There were no clear guidelines for employees and others, such as agency workers, on safe ways to polish.

The HSE inspector commented: *“Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.”*

Incident 2: Workers exposed to Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

What happened

THE UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE) reports that an engineering firm has been fined for failing to control the risk of hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) to employees using hand-held power tools. A welder who had been working at the company for a number of years had been given a job that involved a significant amount of grinding and polishing. After some hours on the task, the worker began to experience numbness and tingling. He asked to swap with another worker but was told to carry on.

Whilst his symptoms continued he was told by his supervisor to carry on using vibrating tools. A few weeks later, a 20-year-old apprentice welder also began to suffer from vibration-related symptoms from using similar tools.

What went wrong/causes

The company failed to adequately control the risks to its employees from exposure to vibration. The company also failed to ensure its employees were given sufficient information, instruction and training on the effects of working with vibrating hand tools.

The HSE inspector said: *“This is a case of the company failing to protect workers using vibrating tools. Exposure to hand-arm vibration is a well-known risk which the company failed to adequately control. The company also failed to ensure workers were looked after when symptoms did arise leading to further exposure. This was wholly inadequate, and led to two employees suffering significant health effects.”*

Members are encouraged to bring to the attention of their crews the IMCA safety promotional materials on hand safety and other topics, available free to members. See <https://www.imca-int.com/core/hsse/publications/safety-promotion/>

Hand and finger injuries comprise a significant proportion of all the incidents reported by IMCA members and, in many cases, the root causes of the injuries – as in these cases – are failure to assess risk or properly manage change, or failure to provide a safe system of work.

Members may wish to review the following incident:

- Uncontrolled exposure to hand-arm vibration (HAVS)

In summary

IMCA members continue to report significant numbers of hand and finger injuries. They can be broadly divided into two categories:

- firstly, incidents/injuries in which the use of hand tools was a causal factor, and
- secondly, finger nips and crush injuries caused when moving large or heavy objects from one place to another (which is a core task for anyone operating vessels and hence for most IMCA members).

Actions

Members may wish to look at some of the following incidents (search words: *hand, finger, crush*):

- This list focuses on injuries caused during use of hand tools:
 - Machine guarding
 - Lost time injury (LTI): Hand cut during cutting operations
 - Marine Safe Australia – Hand injuries
 - Hand injuries

- Lost time injury (LTI): Hand injury
 - Portable grinders – hand safety
 - Finger and hand injuries
 - Finger/hand injuries
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- This list focuses on finger nips and crushes generally, but not always, from loading or lifting operations:
 - Crushed finger
 - Lost time injury (LTI): Finger injury whilst working in engine room
 - Finger injury during maintenance work – restricted work case
 - Finger injury during loading operations
 - Line of fire LTI: Finger injury during lifting operations
 - Lack of safety awareness: crush injury during lifting operations
 - Serious hand injury

IMCA Safety Flashes summarise key safety matters and incidents, allowing lessons to be more easily learnt for the benefit of the entire offshore industry.

The effectiveness of the IMCA Safety Flash system depends on the industry sharing information and so avoiding repeat incidents. Incidents are classified according to IOGP's Life Saving Rules.

All information is anonymised or sanitised, as appropriate, and warnings for graphic content included where possible.

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