

Mines Inspectorate
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Safety alert 210
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Dozer Falls from Bench

Mine Type: All Surface Mines

Incident: During dayshift at a surface coal mine, a dozer operator was cleaning along a bench to remove a ramp. The operator was reversing into position to push material forward when the dozer dropped over the edge of the bench, falling about 12 metres onto a pile of loose material. The dozer remained in a vertical position. The operator was uninjured and was evacuated by emergency services personnel.



Equipment: Caterpillar D11T Dozer

Hazard: Fall of earth moving equipment from a bench

Cause: The operator overestimated the clearance he had between the bench edge and the material he was going to push.

Comments: The investigation is still in progress.

The dozer was a new model recently introduced to the operation. A risk assessment was conducted to identify hazards and risk control measures associated with the introduction of this new equipment.

Operation of earth moving equipment in the vicinity of bench edges is common in the mining and quarrying industry.

On 22 October 2008 a dozer operator at a mine in the United States was fatally injured when his dozer rolled down an embankment. In the previous five weeks, there had been three similar accidents in which United States dozer operators were killed or seriously injured.

Recommendations:

Review the adequacy of control measures in place to prevent earthmoving equipment from falling over bench edges. Refer to the Alert relating to recent dozer accidents on the following United States Mining Safety and Health Administration website for further information on risk control measures: <http://www.msha.gov/Alerts/SafetyFlyers/DozerAlert102008.pdf>

Consider applying current GPS technology to assist earthmoving equipment operators working on benches to accurately locate their position relative to the bench edge, and to identify no-go zones.

Also consider the use of remotely controlled earthmoving equipment when operating in the vicinity of a bench edge where it is not practicable to construct a safety berm.

Communicate the hazards and risk control measures, identified in risk assessments for the introduction of new earth moving equipment, to the affected mine workers. Do this before the equipment is put into operation.

Monitor the initial operation of new earth moving equipment to verify the effectiveness of control measures. Continue to monitor, as appropriate, for the risk of the task being undertaken with the equipment.

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Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety alert. Any such advice supplied to site should reach those who require it, and it should also be placed on the mine notice boards.

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