

Haul truck passenger fatality

This Alert warns mine operators, contractors, truck drivers and other users of the dangers of operating heavy vehicles in close proximity to people.

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Summary

This Alert highlights the dangers of operating heavy vehicles in pedestrian areas, following the fatality of a passenger alighting from a heavy earthmoving vehicle on a mine site.

Haul trucks are one of the most common pieces of equipment on mine sites. Their size and height combine to create blind spots around the perimeter of the truck.

Background

The deceased was working as part of a contract team extending a tailings embankment for a mine. Following a break, he got a lift from the crib hut back to his work area in one of the contractor's 40-tonne articulated haul truck.

The truck operator stopped to let the man out. He went down the stairs facing the rear of the vehicle. When the driver moved off, he was unaware the man, who was between the front and rear wheels at this point, had not cleared the vehicle. The left rear wheels of the double axle assembly passed over him, causing fatal injuries.

The steps exiting from the left side of the truck's cabin run both forward and backwards over the front wheel mudguard. The front steps provide access to the front windscreen but do not extend to the ground. The main egress is backwards, down into the articulating area of the vehicle and behind the operator's cabin. The steps follow the shape of the mudguard, with the step closest to the ground supported only by steel ropes.



Left side egress of a 40 tonne articulated haul truck.

Recommendations

For vehicle operators and users

- Access and exit the vehicle cabin facing the steps. Grip the handrails and always maintain three points of contact.
- Where possible, avoid anyone other than the operator riding in the vehicle.
- Know and understand the vehicle's blind spots.
- Ensure there is active communication between the vehicle operator and pedestrians. Use clear signals to indicate when people are clear before the vehicle is moved or operated.

For employers

- Minimise the interface between vehicles and people with a suitable traffic management system and procedures.
- Ensure employees and contractors are trained in controls implemented to minimise their exposure to the risks, and are aware of the safety hazards haul trucks pose.
- Supervise employees to make sure they follow risk controls safely.
- Regularly check that risk controls are effective and current.
- Where possible, use heavy vehicles that are designed to minimise exposure to hazards rather than using warning signs for potential hazards.

Contact Details

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For more information on occupational health and safety, go to WorkSafe's website: worksafe.vic.gov.au