Opal miner injured by falling material

INCIDENT
An opal miner suffered a spinal injury when he tried to close a hopper door with a star picket and was struck by falling mullock.

CIRCUMSTANCES
The worker was investigating a hopper door malfunction on the surface at an opal mine. The worker used a star picket to push the door closed when material ejected from the hopper, striking him.

INVESTIGATION
Mine Safety inspectors examined the hopper and found that the refuse material was moist and caused a build up inside the walls. This in turn caused the exit door to jam open and not seal correctly.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Ensure that a risk assessment is carried out before undertaking unfamiliar tasks.
- Assess the potential for rocks and debris to fall and cause injury.
- Where there is any potential for material to fall from a height which may result in injury, take effective means to prevent such injuries.
- Any area where materials can accidentally fall onto people should be classified as a danger zone and appropriate guards and warning signs must be provided.
- Ensure workers are trained and competent in the use of blower extraction systems.
- Ensure that equipment being used is fit for purpose.
Figure 1: The truck mounted blower and hopper involved in the incident. Photos by Mine Safety.

Figure 2: The truck mounted blower showing where the mullock fell. Photos by Mine Safety.
Figure 3: The hopper involved in the incident showing the discharge chute door which failed to seal. Photo by Mine Safety.

Figure 4: The hopper showing the discharge chute door. Photo by Mine Safety.
NOTE: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine’s information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine’s notice board.

Issued by

David McLean
Chief Inspector of Mines
Appointed pursuant to Work Health & Safety (Mines and Petroleum) Act 2013


Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information on which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Department of Industry or the user’s independent advisor.