

SAFETY ALERT

Driver loses control of light vehicle and crashes in underground mine.

INCIDENT

The driver of a personnel transport and service vehicle (single cabin, four-wheel drive tray-top utility) lost control of the vehicle while travelling down a decline into an underground mine and crashed into the wall.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The driver and two passengers, with their underground safety gear, were travelling to their job site. After the incident, the driver reported the loss of control of the brakes and transmission and turned the vehicle into the wall to bring it to a halt. There were no significant injuries.

This type of vehicle is commonly supplied with a bucket seat and lap/sash seatbelt for the driver, and a "three quarter" bench seat for passengers with a lap/sash seatbelt for the passenger near the door and a lap belt only for the middle passenger.

Photo: Seating and seatbelt arrangement.



INVESTIGATION

The incident investigation determined that:

1. there was no mechanical fault with the vehicle brakes or transmission
2. the transmission transfer case lever had been inadvertently knocked into the neutral position by the driver who therefore had no gears and no engine braking
3. the driver was pumping the clutch pedal, not the brake pedal, therefore had no braking.

The investigation concluded that the cabin of the vehicle was not equipped to safely accommodate three people and this contributed to the transmission being knocked into neutral, and to the failure of the driver to properly control the vehicle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mines should conduct a risk assessment for the operation of personnel transport vehicles to determine the number of passengers that can be carried safely in the cabin, in a manner that will not pose a risk to the proper control of the vehicle by the driver.
2. Mines should ensure that all passengers carried in personnel transport vehicles have access to seats and seatbelts that are suitable for the level of risk and provide a level of protection that is equivalent to that provided to the driver.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011, Cl.215 Powered mobile plant—specific control measures.

- (1) *This clause applies to a person with management or control of powered mobile plant at a workplace.*
- (2) *The person must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that a suitable combination of operator protective devices for the plant is provided, maintained and used.*
- (3) *The person must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that no person other than the operator rides on the plant unless the person is provided with a level of protection that is equivalent to that provided to the operator.*

MDG 15, Guideline for mobile and transportable plant for use at mines, Clause 3.13.4 Seats and Seat Belt.

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

Gary Parker

Chief Inspector of Mines

Appointed pursuant to Work Health and Safety (Mines) Act 2014

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