Not Wearing Seatbelts Results In Death

Two truck drivers were killed in two separate incidents in the mining industry. These fatalities had something in common – neither driver was wearing a seat belt.

In the first incident, an ore truck driver with 12 years experience was involved in an crash at an open-pit mine. He apparently had a good driving record and was a conscientious operator.

About three hours into the shift a nearby driller saw the truck as it tumbled down a 100 foot hill. When assistance arrived the driver was lying on the ground alive but unconscious. He was evacuated to the closest hospital and then transferred to a trauma facility. Early the next morning he died from massive head and brain injuries.

The investigation couldn't find any indication of mechanical failure that may have caused the tragedy; however, there were other circumstances that may have led to his death. He was apparently having personal problems and he may have been inattentive and distracted. A few seconds is sometimes all it takes for tragedy to occur.

The truck was equipped with seat restraints, but the driver was not wearing his seat belt. Investigators found comparatively little damage to the operator's compartment, and it is quite likely that he could have survived the roll-over if he had been wearing his seatbelt.

The second fatality report also involved open-pit mining and an ore truck. The operator was relatively new with only one year experience as an ore truck driver. This driver was working the night shift and operating on an extremely slippery road surface. He was not familiar with the truck. Earlier, other workers had reported the truck was hard to control.

The other drivers at the mine told the investigators that it is better to "jump to safety" than to remain in the unit when it is headed over a bank. This operator jumped as the truck hit the shoulder of the road. He was then run over by the left rear wheels of his 77 ton vehicle. The truck did not go over the embankment, but came to rest against a rock wall.

This fatality points to two safety factors that may have prevented the tragedy. Had the operator been wearing his seat belt and stayed in the vehicle he would

have been relatively uninjured. And had he been accustomed to the vehicle he may have been able to anticipate how it would react on a “greasy” road surface.