Worker Killed Clearing Rock Crusher



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The 45-year-old worker was operating the crusher for a construction company, which subcontracted to the US government to produce gravel for forest roads.

The crusher itself was a cylinder inside which big hammers rotated at 2400 rpm, battering the rock to pieces. A loader placed rocks on a vibrating screen, which fed the crusher. Although it was possible to shut it down from a distance, it was important that someone watch the machine closely in order to notice jams. If a jam built up, it would mean hours with the machine shut down while workers dug out compacted debris.

Despite this, there was no protected observation platform, and workers had the habit of standing on the crusher housing almost directly above the hopper opening. This was where the victim was standing when a large rock apparently jammed on its way in.

The victim turned off the vibrating feeder screen, but not the crusher, and tried to pry the rock out with a five-foot pry bar. The pry bar caught one of the rotating hammers and was flung back with tremendous force. A co-worker noticed the victim lying on a platform at the base of the machine. The victim was bleeding heavily from a wound in his neck. The bleeding couldn’t be stopped, and the victim died.

Do you take care around machines? No one should ever be standing guard over moving machinery without having both protection and a kill switch. The jam-clearing procedure required that the crusher be turned off. Attempting to avoid the delay cost this worker his life. Follow the instructions and perform the steps correctly and in order.

Source: Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 03OR040