

Lesson Learned No. 39

Operative working at height without fall protection

Events Description:

During ROW clearance, there was a mechanical failure in one excavators. The work required to fix the excavator was to replace two hoses which were leaking on the excavator boom.

The activity required repair works to be carried out on top of the extendable boom. The boom was lowered as close to the ground as possible, but no safe work platform was provided. The height from the top of the boom to ground level was approximately 3.5 m.

The individual asked the excavator operator to switch off the engine and engage the safety lever (hydraulic knock-out). The mechanic then climbed up the excavator boom to reach the area where the hoses were located. The individual was not wearing fall arrest equipment at the time of the intervention.

Possible Consequences:

Lost Time Injury

Immediate Actions:

- Activities suspended.
- Investigation launched
- Stand Down undertaken with all maintenance teams
- Individual suspended from work pending investigation conclusion

Possible Reasons:

- Lack of risk perception from work team and individual
- Over time this method of working had become a standard, accepted way of working for the team
- The decision to complete the repairs as quick as possible, impacted on risk perception of individual
- The individual was equipped with minimum Project required PPE, but no task-specific Fall Protection PPE.

Lesson Learned Conclusion:

- Failure to act or intervene from work team
- Improper risk perception
- Safe platforms or work to be undertaken from the ground level (eliminate need for Working at Height)
- Working at heights safety harness anchored to a safe point must be worn at all the times.

Photos:



Fig 1. Recreation of incident



Fig 2. Correct method eliminating working at height