04 April, 2003

INDUSTRY ALERT

Paper Machine, Dryer Section Fatality

On the 25th March 2003 an employee was fatally injured after being entangled in an exposed nip point on the fourth dryer section of the paper-making machine, F6, at the AMCOR Fibre Packaging mill in Fairfield, Victoria.

Currently a joint investigation by AMCOR and the CFMEU Pulp and Paper Workers Branch is underway. This investigation is being undertaken with the direct involvement of employees representatives. The findings of this investigation are not finalised at this stage. However, we recognise the importance of providing information to the pulp and paper industry as quickly as possible in order to minimise the risks to other employees working with the same or similar plant.

Following this incident WorkSafe placed a Prohibition Notice on the F6 paper machine, rendering it inoperable in it's current state. Since that time we have been working to develop appropriate control measures to eliminate or minimise the hazards and allow operations to recommence.

A team comprising three employee representatives, three employer representatives and two external technicians have conducted a risk assessment on the dryer section of the paper machine. From this risk assessment a series of controls have been developed. These have been divided into short, medium and long term control measures. Utilsing standard consultation processes, the short term controls must be implemented before WorkSafe will consider rescinding the Prohibition Notice. The medium and long term controls must then be addressed.

To assist the pulp and paper industry in the immediate future please find set out below the short term controls developed by the risk assessment team. They have been reviewed by WorkSafe:

Short Term Control Measures – F6 Dryer Section

1. Conduct maintenance work to the rear doors of the dryer section to enable the doors to be fixed in the closed position with a controlled lock. The purpose of these actions is to negate access to the nip hazards located at the rear of the dryer section. This is to be considered a short term solution, as the access to the rear of the dryer section is required for preventative maintenance of bearings and other components. Further guarding will be required.

2. Audio/visual pre-start warning device should be fitted to the plant to provide cues to operators on the impending start up or energizing of the plant. This action is to provide the opportunity for people working outside the direct line of sight of the operator, to remove themselves from the machine or not place themselves near the machine. This is in line with the related standard

AS:1755 regarding the design and operational safety requirements of conveyor systems.

3. Rationalise, redistribute and shorten the air hoses along the dryer section. It is recognised that the infrequency of air hoses along the machine results in longer hoses being used to ensure whole machine coverage. Rationalising the number of air hoses is aimed at limiting the hoses only to areas where they are required. The redistribution of the air hose outlets, to place them strategically along the length of the machine, will enable shorter, recoilable hoses to be used. The hoses will be serviced from overhead to remove the exposure to the trip hazards associated with hoses on the floor.

4. Fit fixed guarding along the length of the dryer section. The design will allow visual inspection and air hosing when required, but not permit people to reach into the various nip hazards along the length of the dryer section. The guard would be initially fixed and will require mechanical tools and the application of permit systems for it to be removed and reinstated. The guarding will be designed and constructed in line with AS:4024.1 1996, to achieve high functional reliability. Attached for your information are photographs of similar guards, currently in place on some European paper machines. (TO BE CONFIRMED)

5. Trial alternative air gun nozzles to allow practical use of air hoses with guards in place.

6. Degreasing of the machine, walkways and grating is to be conducted suitably frequently as a preventative maintenance activity and monitored accordingly.

7. Signage will be installed in strategic locations to inform people working in this area of the systems in place to remove and reinstate guards.

8. Review and reissue work instructions / procedures to reflect appropriate work methods in line with risk management systems and information and the operational productivity of the plant.

9. Training will be conducted one-on-one with operators regarding the changes in the operator interaction with the dryer section, any work instructions / procedures and the risk management systems implemented, and to be implemented.

WorkSafe have indicated that once the guarding options have been implemented, they will be viewed as the current state of knowledge regarding paper machine hazards and it is anticipated they will become an industry standard.

It is also anticipated that guarding of a similar standard will be required at the Wet End and Press Sections of the paper machine. Again, short term controls may be required in the immediate future for the commencement of operations at F6.

Given the gravity of this incident WorkSafe are planning to visit all sites in Victoria with similar plant, and have taken steps to notify agencies in other states in order that they can do the same.

Additional information will be provided to you as it becomes available.

For further information please contact:

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