Don’t Get Caught With Your Guard Down

Getting caught in machinery is every worker’s nightmare, but you can prevent it from becoming yours with a little vigilance.

Many workers in the oil and gas industry face mechanical hazards at every turn, particularly “roughnecks” on oil rigs and drilling platforms.

Rotating equipment, such as a kelly bar, can entangle you in an instant. For example, one motor man’s fall protection lanyard became caught and wrapped around a rotating kelly bar. He died when the lanyard pulled him into the rotating bushing.

Investigators in this case recommended the following:

- Establish and clearly mark a danger zone around the rotary table.
- Guard rotating equipment or equip it with warning alarms or emergency stops when workers enter the zone.
- Keep hoses and cables away from rotating equipment.
- Ensure workers remove fall protection gear immediately when it’s not required.
- Ensure workers remove or confine loose clothing, hair and jewelry.

Whenever visibility on the rig floor is obscured, employees should cease work in the area while the rotary table is in motion.

There are usually two causes of entanglement incidents:

- The machine is not adequately guarded.
- The victim is wearing a dangling or loose item.

The latter was the cause of an amputation injury suffered by a worker who was threading ‘stem wipes? onto a seismic drill stem. The worker stumbled and his jacket got caught on one of the rotating stem wipes. His clothing wrapped tightly around the stem, resulting in the immediate amputation of one of his arms.

Protective guards are often the best way to prevent injury and death around machinery. Workers should never remove or block a machine guard, and they should always report any missing or defective guards.

Getting caught in a pinchpoint can cause a disabling injury, such as a hand mangled beyond repair. Or it can drag your entire body into a machine and kill you instantly.

When maintaining or repairing machinery, carefully follow lockout procedures so the equipment cannot be started accidentally. Always test the equipment once it’s locked out to ensure the procedure has worked.

Many injuries and fatalities involving hydraulic power occur because workers are

poorly trained and not informed of the hazards. Hydraulic equipment can move unexpectedly, even when other sources of energy are locked out.

Working with rotating equipment or any type of moving machinery requires constant attention to safety, so never let your guard down.