

INJURY FROM METAL FRAGMENT

This very serious injury happened on one of our sites.

A drilling rig was being used at a borrow pit to drill holes in preparation for blasting. The drill bit needed to be replaced and the Sub-Contractor's Plant Fitter came to site to undertake the replacement.

To facilitate easy access to the drill bit, the drilling rig arm was placed in the horizontal position.

The drill bit was held in place by a metal 'chuck'. The 'chuck' had to be unscrewed to release the drill bit. This proved to be difficult and the Plant Fitter used a sledge hammer to release the 'chuck' from the threaded connection.

An operative, also employed by the Sub-Contractor, was standing approximately 12m away. Whilst the 'chuck' was being struck by the sledge hammer, a small piece of metal broke free, and travelling horizontally, hit the operative in the stomach. The operative was taken to hospital and underwent an operation to have the fragment of metal removed.

This accident could have had disastrous consequences.



Drilling Rig used at Borrow Pit



Sledge hammer used to loosen threaded joint of 'chuck'



Piece of metal broken from 'chuck'

PLEASE NOTE:-

- 1. It is dangerous to strike metal castings with tools such as hammers. As seen from this accident, this type of metal can break.**
- 2. Maintenance personnel need to have risk assessments and a method statement / safe system of work for undertaking maintenance on site.**
- 3. The manufacturer's recommendations for removing a drill bit of this type clearly states 'Never Use a Sledge-Hammer on Down-the-Hole Hammers'. There is a special tool for the job.**