



RIP & SHARE

Don't Get Carried Away Working Around Conveyor Belts



One problem with conveyors is that while they look fragile, compared to their more “rugged” equipment counterparts — the crushers and screens — they account for many incidents, injuries and even fatalities in aggregate operations. When numerous conveyors crisscross the landscape, workers often don’t “see” them — nor do they see the risks that conveyors present. And it’s not always the inexperienced workers who fail to follow safety procedures.

Earlier this year, a miner with 32 years of experience was fatally injured at a sand and gravel operation in Alaska. The victim went behind a conveyor belt take-up pulley guard and used a wooden-handled shovel to clean under the pulley. He was entangled in the pulley and was killed.

Several miners have recently been seriously injured performing cleanup or maintenance duties around conveyor belts. These accidents could have been prevented if mine operators had established safe work procedures or workers had followed established procedures when working around conveyor belts.

The vast majority of reported incidents involving conveyors occur when the injured worker is performing some sort of maintenance operation, or while cleaning or shoveling around the conveyor. The causes of the injuries can be traced to such conditions as poorly guarded equipment, equipment

with removed guards, attempting to work with moving equipment (especially reaching around a guard to do so) and wearing loose clothing. In all of these cases, training would have helped to prevent risky behavior.

Fundamental Conveyor Belt Safety Procedures

- Provide safety training in hazard recognition and the proper way to handle tasks safely for all employees.
- Do not service or work on conveyor belts until the conveyor is shut off and the motor disconnect is locked and tagged out.
- Avoid working around an operating conveyor, *e.g.* cleaning around and underneath moving conveyors.
- Keep areas around conveyor belts clear of obstructions.
- Keep clothing, fingers, hair, other parts of the body and jewelry away from moving conveyor belts. Bind long hair and avoid loose clothing.
- Do not remove or alter conveyor belt guards. Never reach around a guard to work on a conveyor.
- Know the location and function of all stop and start controls. Keep all stop and start control devices for conveyor belts free from obstructions.
- Keep all personnel clear of conveyor belts before they are started. ■