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Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic

Safety Lessons Learned Accident Abstract

Accident Type: Load dropped while lifting
Injury: Not applicable near miss
Damage: Windshield and dash of a Cat IT28G Loader
Type of Work: Trenching for the installation of direct buried underground steam and condensate lines
Equipment: Catapillar IT28G Loader with fork attachment



DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCIDENT:

The excavating subcontractor in the demobilization phase of the project was lifting a large trench shield, 24'L x 8'H x 8'W, off of a flatbed truck with a Loader having a fork attachment when the trench shield hit a section of an already disassembled trench shield laying on the flatbed truck causing the trench shield to become unbalanced and slip off the top bracket of the fork attachment. At this time the trench shield came crashing down onto the front of the cab of the Loader shattering its windshield and dash. Due to the operator leaning forward enabling him to view the top of the load he was estimated to have been about six inches away from becoming seriously injured or possibly killed when the trench shield fell against the cab. This trench shield was one of the larger ones on site weighing 12,000 pounds.

DIRECT CAUSE:

- In an attempt to expedite demobilization, a step was omitted to break down and load trench shields to be removed from the site. Upon realization that the omitted step presented a procedural problem in the break down of the equipment, the attempt to correct caused a hazardous condition.

INDIRECT CAUSE:

- Procedures not fully adhered to in the break down of the trench shields, the breakdown location was relocated from ground level to the flatbed truck which resulted in the Loader having inadequate reach.
- Not using the equipment as its intended purpose per the manufacturer's recommendations, the top bracket of the fork attachment was used to gain additional lifting height which resulted in the load becoming unstable.
- Improper equipment used to perform the task, the equipment was undersized.
- Inappropriate positioning of equipment to perform the task, this was due to the equipment being undersized.

ROOT CAUSE:

- The operator of the Loader took it upon himself to change the procedure to break down the trench shield without approval from his immediate supervisor in an effort to speed up the demobilization process.
- The ground worker should of spoke up in regards to the Loader operator not working safely.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The Activity Hazard Analysis could have gone into more detail for every step of the trench shield disassembly procedure.
- A good communication chain of command has to be in place and followed.
- Employees are to confer with their supervisor if they feel they are about to use a piece of machinery as it is not intended.
- When a procedure is to be change by an employee they must get approval from their immediate supervisor.
- Anyone on the site can bring a safety concern to their immediate supervisor for review.

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