



Driller's Helper Killed After Becoming Caught in Auger Pipe on a Seismic Drill Rig

Accident Description

An accident resulting in a fatality occurred in the Northwest Territories. A driller's helper working on a seismic drill rig, became entangled in the rotating lead rod and subsequently died from his injuries.

During the warm up procedures prior to drilling the first hole of the morning, the driller's helper, a member of the two person crew, attempted to connect the drilling lead rod (a section of auger drill pipe with a drill bit attached) to the rotating head of the drill. The driller's helper became entangled in the lead rod assembly when it tightened up on the kelly pin and commenced its rotation. The driller who was occupied elsewhere on the rig, was not at the controls and therefore could not stop the equipment.

Cause of the Accident

The driller's helper while attempting to thread the lead rod onto the rotating head of the drill rig became entangled in the lead rod when it tightened up on the kelly pin and commenced its rotation. When the lead rod began to turn he was drawn into the mast of the drill rig where he sustained injuries resulting in his death.

Safety procedures for adding pipe, bit or a lead rod specify that it is a two person task and that one person must be located at the drill rig's controls. The driller's presence at the drill rig controls is imperative to the driller's helper safety, so that the driller can stop the rotary head's rotation in the event of such an emergency.

Preventive Actions

Operators must ensure that the equipment and or procedures are in place to remove or prevent the possibility of personnel operating rotating equipment alone. If equipment modifications are made to remove this hazard, they should be properly tested to ensure that additional hazards are not introduced. Changes in procedures to remove the hazard by eliminating the possibility that a worker can become entangled in equipment should be documented and demonstrated to the crews. Supervision and checks should be incorporated into training to ensure the proper safe procedures have been adopted by the crews.

For additional information regarding this advisory please contact the National Energy Board at (403) 292-4800 and ask for assistance from staff who deal with incident investigation matters in frontier areas.