

SAFETY ALERT



SERIOUS ACCIDENT INVOLVING A HARDENED STEEL HAMMER

INCIDENT

An operator struck a steel pin with a steel hammer. Immediately, he felt a sharp pain as a steel fragment went flying into his arm. The injury required surgery to remove the fragment.

CIRCUMSTANCES

A hardened steel hammer came into contact forcefully with another hardened steel item. Contact between the hammer and edge of the steel pin caused a small fragment to break off from the edge of the steel pin and travel at high speed, entering the operator's arm.

INVESTIGATION

After this accident occurred, it was decided to use soft copper hammers.

If a drift is used, it was decided to use a malleable drift which is made of mild steel, brass or copper.

(A drift is a round, pointed piece of steel for enlarging holes in metal, or for bringing holes in line to receive rivets etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- All chisels and wedges or similar tools should be regularly maintained and ground flat if splayed out after use.
- Ensure that the item to be hit is not harder than the hardened steel face of the hammer.
- However, if the item to be hit is made of hardened steel, use only hammers made of mild steel, copper, or similar softer metal.
- If a drift is used, it should be made of malleable material such as mild steel, copper, etc.
- Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, such as eye protection and gloves, should be available at each site and worn with long sleeves when performing such tasks.

See also the attached Immediate Accident/Incident Notification Circular dated 7 March 1995, highlighting the need for eye protection when working with metal.

Contact: Mark Stephens, Regional Inspector of Mines, Orange NSW, Australia (Phone 02 6360 8289).

G. Terrey
DIRECTOR, MINE SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT