

FATAL ALERT

On May 20, 2013, an employee working for an oilfield equipment repair facility was “pulled into” a vertical lathe used for refurbishing large oilfield blow out preventer piece of equipment. At the time of the accident, the employee was in the process of examining the cutting bit and surface of the blowout preventer piece of equipment. During this inspection process, the blowout preventer piece continued to turn at approximately 10 to 12 revolutions per minute. The employee discovered that the cutting bit associated with the lathe had been broken by an uneven surface on the interior of the blowout preventer piece. As the blowout preventer piece continued to turn, a threaded small bore piping adapter protruding approximately 1 ½” to 2” from the exterior of the blowout preventer piece, caught the pocket of the sweatshirt being worn by the employee/operator and caused him to be pulled into the gap between the frame of the lathe and the rotating chuck causing severe injuries to his chest and head. The employee later died at the hospital from blunt force trauma to the chest and head.

Significant Factors

- The employer did not have any policies or procedures developed or implemented for the operation of the vertical lathe.
- The operator of the lathe is required to work in close proximity to the rotating table (chuck).
- The hand controls for the lathe are located as close as 23” to the rotating table (chuck).
- The operator of the lathe is required to frequently lean over the item being turned by the lathe to examine the work being performed for tool wear and quality control.
- The vertical lathe was approximately 60 years old and did not have any guarding as part of the equipment.
- The employer has specific verbiage in their Health and Safety Program identifying the requirement of not wearing loose clothing around the vertical lathe.
- The employer representative stated that he relied on the employee (who had 30 plus years of experience in machining work) to exercise good judgment and utilize his expertise while utilizing the vertical lathe.

Recommendations

- Brief all future and current employees on the safety aspects of all areas of the job.
- Ensure that adequate guarding is provided to and used by employees that may use the vertical lathe.
- Develop and implement procedures for the safe use and operation of the vertical lathe.
- Ensure that safety meetings are being conducted prior to the start of all projects to discuss the work to be performed, identifying the potential safety hazards and implementing safe work procedures to control hazards.