

FATAL ALERT

December 12, 2005,

On December 12, 2005, at approximately 3:00 pm, the fast line sheave on an oil and gas drilling rig failed and cut the drill line. The blocks were approximately 90-feet high when the line was cut causing everything to crash to the rig floor.

In addition to the drilling crew, the well owner's representative and a service operator were on the rig floor at the time of the incident. The driller was at the brake handle, the rig manager was right next to him with the service operator and the company man behind them at the driller's console. Their attention was focused on the weight indicator. When the line snapped, they all turned to run for the doghouse. Everyone made it to safety except the driller. He was half way into the doghouse when the drill line struck him and cut him down the middle of the back.

Significant Factors

- The crew had been "stuck" on the previous hole
- They were experiencing "tight" pulls on this hole
- The weather had been extremely cold (-35° F)
- The American Petroleum Institute (API) guidelines for sheave inspections were not being followed
- Not all personnel responsible for inspecting the fast line sheave had been adequately trained as to what to look for
- The fast line sheave was extremely fatigued and worn beyond a reasonable safety factor
- The employer experienced a similar incident on a different rig approximately 12 months prior in which two employees were injured. The necessary information had not been adequately disseminated to the potentially affected workforce to prevent another catastrophic event.

Recommendations

- All employees should be briefed on the facts and circumstances of this fatal accident
- Employer needs to implement a program of inspecting the crown and sheaves in accordance with the API guidelines
- Employer needs to ensure that all employees responsible for sheave and crown inspections are trained on what to inspect for
- Employer needs to develop and implement a program to take a sheave out-of-service when it is worn and prior to fatigue leading to a catastrophic event
- Employer needs to develop and implement procedures to ensure that information on rig accidents, near misses, and equipment failures is shared with company personnel as necessary to ensure appropriate preventative action is taken.