

Tailings Line Unblockage Fatality

Synopsis

On Friday, July 31, 2020, an incident resulting in a fatality occurred involving the unblocking of a tailings line. The jet hose being used to unblock the tailings line had become stuck and was unable to be retrieved using a vacuum truck hose spool. During the first pull attempt with a telehandler the hose had been stretched and unknowingly placed under tension and was pinned beside the next tailings line. On the second pull with the telehandler the jet hose moved suddenly from its pinned position and across the other tailings lines. A worker standing on the tailings line was forcefully knocked off their feet during the second pull, sustaining critical injuries and later passing from those injuries.



FIGURE 1. Line blocking work area where incident occurred.

Finding

After the incident was reported to the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation as per *the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia*, an investigation, under [Section 7](#) of the *Mines Act*, was initiated by the Chief Inspector of Mines (CIM).

The investigation determined the following key findings:

- **Poor Planning:** Little evidence of any formal planning for the unblocking work. No planning documentation or prework assessments were conducted by the mine prior to work commencing.
- **Unclear Supervision:** Along with a contractor there were multiple mine department workers at the unblockage work site. Clear supervisory responsibilities were not in place at the work site.

- No Safe Work Practices: During the unblockage work the contractor had a Safe Work Procedure, but this Safe Work Procedure was not shared with the mine and was not adjusted when the scope of the work changed.
- Field Level Hazard Assessment: Field Level Hazard Assessments do not include evaluation for a Safe Operating Procedure or a Job Hazard Assessment for the work task.
- Entering No Go Area or Line of Fire: There was a high likelihood of there being a line of fire occurring as the hose came out of the line.
- Under Pressure: Worker voiced comments during the unblocking task of being under pressure to complete the job.

Outcome

The Mines Investigative Unit made one recommendation based on the findings of the investigation.

A Hazard Alert to be issued and in November 2021, Hazard Alert No.15 was published [Hazard Alerts - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#) by the CIM. The Hazard Alert included awareness of this incident and other investigations that identified poor work planning resulting in severe injuries, including fatalities. The Hazard Alert highlights the importance of completing Safe Work Plans and Job Hazard Analysis and for the continuous and regular monitoring for new hazards throughout undertaking the task.