

Unattended Rollaway Event

Synopsis

On Sunday, March 6, 2022, a worker was injured during an attempt to stop a mine vehicle that began to roll forward on a downgrade and travelled ~73 m across an active haul road (“the unattended rollaway event”).¹ At approximately 21:25 hours, two workers employed at an open pit mine exited a medium-duty truck to position large orange channelizer drums beside an unmarked electrical cable lying on the ground at the side of a haul road. Shortly after the driver closed the left front door, the unattended vehicle began to roll forward on a 7% grade with the co-worker standing on the rear deck.

The driver attempted to re-enter the cab compartment to gain control of the truck, however, slipped and fell to the ground. After the driver was seen sliding on the ground, the co-worker jumped off the rear deck, ran to where the driver was lying unconscious on the haul road, and took immediate steps to avert a haul truck from interacting with both workers.

Findings

The Chief Inspector of Mines directed the Mines Investigation Unit to investigate the unattended rollaway event pursuant to Section 1 of the Mines Act, Mines Regulation. The investigation determined that the probable cause of the unattended rollaway event was the failure of the driver to adequately secure the medium duty truck due to loss of situational awareness, high mental workload, and real or perceived demands to complete assigned tasks quickly. Contributing to the unattended rollaway event was the absence of administrative controls to effectively address the safety implications of the buildup of road spray that resulted in a lackadaisical and habitual approach to secure light and medium duty trucks. The severity of the event was diminished by the deliberate and quick actions of the co-worker.

The investigation determined that a mine vehicle going out of control has a probability of reoccurrence and potential for severe consequences unless additional measures are implemented and effectual at mitigating another unattended rollaway event. Safety hazards identified during the investigation included the buildup of road spray on the undercarriage of light and medium duty trucks, workers slipping and falling when entering or exiting a mine vehicle, and the conspicuity of mine workers.²

¹ An “unattended rollaway” event involves a vehicle travelling out-of-control *without* a driver.

² “Conspicuity” relates to the characteristics that make an object clearly visible and easily noticed.

Outcome

Safety recommendations issued for preventing a reoccurrence included the mine developing and implementing measures for reducing loss of situational awareness and establishing a fail-safe method that would ensure light and medium duty trucks remain stationary when unattended. Further, for the Ministry to develop provisions in the Health Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia for reducing the risk of workers slipping and falling when entering and exiting mine vehicles and increasing the conspicuity of mine workers. A compliance plan was developed to monitor the implementation of safety recommendations.