

## Motorized Carriages Involved in a Fatality and a Serious Hand Injury

**Task:** Unbelling Chokers

**Occupation:** Chaser

**Release Date:** April 4, 2013

A 48-year-old chaser, with over eight years of experience, was killed when he was struck in the head by a 1,200 pound motorized slack-pulling carriage. According to the DOSH inspection, the victim was in the process of reaching for or unhooking a choker when the carriage either fell towards the ground or slid back down the skyline. The DOSH investigation found that the carriage's skyline clamp was not properly adjusted. The improper adjustment of the skyline clamp could not be ruled out as a contributing factor in allowing the carriage to fall.

In a separate incident, a 41-year-old chaser with over 15 years of experience nearly had his left hand amputated when it was crushed between a log and a choker. In this incident, the tower operator, using a swing yarder, had just brought the turn in and slacked the logs down. The logs started to slide back down the hill, so the processor operator reached out and held the logs in place, to allow the victim to unbell the chokers. When the victim went to unbell the choker, he placed his hand between the cable and the logs. As the victim was holding the cable, the skyline clamp on the motorized carriage slipped and the carriage started to go back down the skyline. When the carriage started traveling down the skyline it tightened the slack on the choker, crushing the victim's hand between the choker cable and the logs. The skyline carriage slipped due to not having enough shims in place to hold the skyline clamp in place.

The victim had his pinky finger amputated, and has permanent limited function of his ring and middle finger. The victim has been out of work for the last five months and will never be physically able to return to his job as a chaser.



Photo of carriage involved in fatal incident with red line showing misalignment of the bolts.

### Safety Requirements

- The employer must ensure that each machine operator and maintenance employee complies with the operating and maintenance instructions. See WAC 296-54-573(9)(b).
- The employer must ensure that each machine must be inspected before initial use during each workshift. Defects or damage must be repaired or the unserviceable machine is replaced before beginning work. See WAC 296-54-573(9)(a).
- The employer must develop an Accident Prevention Plan that includes the safe use, operation, and maintenance of tools, machines, and vehicles the employee uses or operates. See WAC 296-54-515(3)(d).

### Recommended Safe Practices

- Adjust and maintain carriages according to manufacturer's specifications, ensuring that clamps are functioning properly and hydraulic pressures are being maintained at specified levels.
- Inspect carriages including skyline clamps and other carriage braking systems daily to ensure in proper working order.
- Whenever possible, avoid working directly underneath or in the path of a carriage.

### Resources\*

- Free workplace safety and health consultations are available from L&I at: [www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov](http://www.SafetyConsult.Lni.wa.gov)
- Free Video from Labor and Industries: Be safe in the woods at: <https://LNI.BeSafeintheWoods>
- Free Handbook from Oregon OSHA: Yarding and Loading Handbook at: [www.OR.OSHA.YardingandLoading](http://www.OR.OSHA.YardingandLoading)
- Free Handbook on Cable Yarding Systems by WorkSafe BC at: <http://WorkSafeBC.CableYardingSystems>
- Free video on finding a safe position while cable yarding by WorkSafe BC at: <http://WorkSafeBC.SafePosition>

### Need more information?

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