



Mines Safety Significant Incident Report No. 176

Light vehicle collides with stationary loader

Summary of incident

A worker was returning to a mine site in the mid-afternoon, after completing work off site. He was driving a light vehicle along a straight well-formed gravel road, having just made a 90° left turn. His next recollection was waking up while crashing into a stationary loader. The loader had broken down several weeks earlier and could not be moved off the road. Its location was delineated with orange traffic cones.



Incident scene (flagging tape added after the incident)

Probable causes

Direct

- From the incident description, it is possible that the worker experienced a micro-sleep.

Note: A micro-sleep, described by ICAO (2011:A-3), is: "A short period of time (seconds) when the brain disengages from the environment (it stops processing visual information and sounds) and slips uncontrollably into light non-REM sleep. Micro-sleeps are a sign of extreme physiological sleepiness."

Action required

There are many causal factors that may increase the likelihood of experiencing micro-sleep episodes. Employers and employees need to be aware of such causal factors.

Further information

The International Civil Aviation Organisation has a website dedicated to fatigue management at www2.icao.int/en/FatigueManagement with documents and toolkits that may be useful.

Visit the publications section of the Resources Safety website at www.dmp.wa.gov.au/ResourcesSafety for a code of practice and guideline on working hours that may provide useful guidance.

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