



Department of Consumer
and Employment Protection
Government of Western Australia

Resources Safety 

Mines Safety

Significant Incident Report No. 149

Loader falling into an open stope

Incident

While backfilling of an open stope was in progress, a loader fell from the top level of the stope to the bottom level, about 15 metres below. The loader landed upside down and the operator was fatally injured. The operator remained in the cabin during the accident and received head and other injuries.

He had started backfilling this particular stope earlier that shift. No backfilling had been done at the stope previously. At the time of the accident a small amount of backfill had been tipped into the stope void.

It appears that the accident occurred as the operator was tipping the third load into the stope.

Immediate causes and contributing factors

- Due to the size of the loader and size of the excavations, forward visibility was limited. This is not unusual and is associated with many such loading operations
- There were no warning devices such as paint marks or delineators placed at the edge of the stope on the top level that would have indicated to the operator that the loader was approaching the edge.
- There was no safety bund or stop installed at the edge of the stope on the top level at the time of the accident.
- As the accident was early in the shift, the supervisor had not yet inspected this working area by the time the accident occurred.

Comments and preventative action

- A complete risk assessment of backfilling operations should be completed before the start of any such operations.
- Following the completion of the risk assessment, a safe working procedure must be developed to include measures to ensure employees or vehicles are not exposed to falling or driving over the edge of a stope.
- Measures such as safety bunds, stops and delineators should be put in place to prevent vehicles and employees from falling into the void.

- Employees must be trained in the safe working procedures, and regular audits and inspections must be carried out to ensure full compliance with the procedures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M J Knee', is enclosed within a faint, light-colored rectangular border.

M J Knee
STATE MINING ENGINEER

10 April 2008