



Selected exploration incidents reported in 2008-09

DEFINITIONS

Days lost covers the days the person did not work when scheduled to do so.

Days off is the total time between when the person was disabled to when they returned to their regular job (i.e. what they were employed to do). It includes days lost, rostered days off, and days when alternative or light duties are performed or hours are restricted.

At the 2009 Exploration Safety Roadshow, participants were surveyed about what resources they would like Resources Safety to develop. Some respondents requested information about recent exploration-specific incidents that could be discussed at toolbox meetings. The following incidents were selected from reports submitted to Resources Safety for 2008-09 in the category of "Exploration – not on a mine site". The reports are reproduced as received apart from some minor editing for clarity and conciseness.

Drilling

Strain

- **Driller, lower arm, 0 days lost, 4 days off** – Repetitive movements from pulling rods and screwing off hauling plug resulted in a strained (tendonitis) right forearm.
- **Driller's assistant, wrist, 35 days lost, 193 days off** – The offsider was returning an aircore drill rod to the rack when he strained his left wrist. At the time of the incident he was performing normal aircore and rod handling duties. The driller was notified and drilling ceased immediately, before continuing with another offsider. The injured offsider had previously injured his wrist while working for another employer and this incident may represent a recurrence or aggravation of that injury. The injured worker was initially assessed by a general practitioner and given restricted duties. However, he was later referred to a specialist who subsequently performed an operation on the wrist to re-attach the tendon. The offsider was then reclassified as unfit for work.
- **Driller's assistant, back, 0 days lost, 1 day off** – The offsider had picked up a 3 metre steel rod from the top of a 2 metre pile of rods. The rods weigh about 20 kg each. As he moved off he felt a sharp pain in his lower mid-back.
- **Driller's assistant, back, 0 days lost, 3 day off** – The offsider felt pain in the right side of his trunk while shaking NO tubes.
- **Driller's assistant, ankle, 0 days lost, 4 day off** – The worker was walking around the front of the lighting plant when he rolled his left ankle. The ground appeared to be even and the person was wearing the correct PPE boots.
- **Driller's assistant, shoulder, 0 days lost, 69 days off** – Offsider presented to safety advisor at the end of the shift stating that his shoulder was sore and had been so for about 5 weeks. He was unable to recall any specific incident that may have lead to his injury, but his work involves manual handling tasks.

Amputation

- **Driller, finger/s, 10 days lost, 88 days off** – While running casing down the hole, the driller raised the head of the drill drive while placing his hand on the top of the latch for the guard. This created a pinch-point as the head of the drill drive rose, trapping the driller's glove and finger tip.

Laceration

- **Driller's assistant, finger/s, 69 days lost, 95 days off** – While the offsider was changing a cutting disc on a hand grinder, the power switch was accidentally activated. The offsider's hand was on the disc when it was engaged, and the spinning disc cut into the small finger of his right hand. The disc lock was not engaged and the grinder power cord was plugged into the power source.

Crushing injury

- **Driller, finger/s, 1 day lost, 3 days off** – The jaw on a Stilson wrench on the rig broke while the drill rig operator was trying to break out rods. The Stilsons dropped, catching the operator's finger between the footplate and Stilsons.
- **Driller, finger/s and thumb, 4 days lost, 97 days off** – While lowering the rod to tag the bottom of the hole, the rod became hung up. The operator had his hand on the rod feeling for the hang up. The winch rope was slack. He then went past the obstruction, causing the rod to drop and jamming his fingers between the water swivel and head.

Bruise or contusion

- **Driller's assistant, head and other, 0 days lost, 14 days off** – A driller's assistant was guiding a pallet lifter into position under a pallet of cement located on the deck of a light truck. As the forks of the lifter were guided into the pallet, the pallet lifter dislodged from the attachment hook of the vehicle-mounted crane (HIAB). The lifter fell and struck

the assistant on the head and shoulder, causing him to fall back onto the ground.

Dislocation of joint

- **Driller's assistant, knee, 106 days lost, 171 days off** – The offsider was reeling out the fuel hose to refuel the drill rig when the hose locked in the reel. With the aid of another offsider, he freed the hose. He then turned with the hose and lost his footing on gravelly ground just beyond the edge of a cleared drill pad. The offsider fell and dislocated his knee.

Fracture or break

- **Driller's assistant, hand, 0 days lost, 16 days off** – Drilling personnel were loading damaged 3 metre NQ2 drilling rods onto a support truck using a forklift. As the rods were being dropped off the forklift tines onto the deck of the truck, over the stand-up guides on the side of the truck, one rod became jammed between surrounding rods, with one end sticking up in the air. The driller's offsider climbed onto the back of the truck and attempted to free the stuck rod using his hands. As the stuck rod came free, the weight of the other rods still on the forklift tines forced the previously stuck rod sideways, pinching the tip of the offsider's left ring finger between the rod and a stand-up guide. The offsider continued to work the rest of the shift and reported the incident the following morning to his supervisor. Assessment at a Wiluna medical centre revealed fractures to the distal bone in the ring finger.
- **Driller's assistant, toe/s, 16 days lost, 21 days off** – Equipment being used by a driller's offsider to loosen drill rods fell to the ground when he lost his grip on it. It struck and fractured his right little toe. He was wearing steel-capped boots.

Effects of exposure to heat

- **Driller's assistant, general body, 1 day lost, 1 day off** – The assistant was working as usual when he appeared to faint, had a headache and showed signs of overheating. He was immediately given water to drink and water was applied to his head. He was then moved to the air-conditioned site office, given more to drink and two Panadol. He fell asleep for about an hour before being taken back to camp, where he showered and went to bed. The assistant reported for work the next day and worked easily, although taking frequent rests in the shade and air-conditioned truck cab. The following day he again reported for work but appeared to faint and was disoriented upon leaving the cab when the site was reached at 7 am. He was immediately taken to the regional hospital, where he received intravenous fluids for rehydration. After several hours he was released from hospital and collected by a company representative and returned to Perth. He was offered light duties at the company's office but declined and went on break a day earlier than scheduled.

Fieldwork

Strain

- **Field assistant, knee, 4 days lost, 4 days off** – The field assistant stumbled and twisted his knee while walking down a slope carrying a heavy backpack. He seemed alright but his knee swelled up the next day after several kilometres of walking.
- **Field assistant, back, 0 days lost, 5 days off** – A tarpaulin was picked up to put in the back of a utility. The field assistant went to place one end of the tarpaulin on the utility tray and twisted while trying to hold the tarpaulin in place, pulling a muscle in her lower back.
- **Field assistant, back, 0 days lost, 14 days off** – While lifting core trays, a field technician twisted sideways, pulling a muscle in his back. After his rostered day off, he visited a doctor followed by a physiotherapist. He was assigned to restricted duties until medically cleared for normal duties.
- **Field assistant, neck and trunk, 9 days lost, 16 days off** – The assistant was photographing core trays, which involved repetitive bending and twisting, and lifting and manoeuvring of the camera frame over long periods. This led to severe muscle tension in the neck and lower and upper back.
- **Field assistant, back, 12 days lost, 33 days off** – The field assistant suffered a strained back when changing the wheel of the 4WD, after a day of quartz vein sampling.
- **Field assistant, arm/s, 269 days lost, 395 days off calculated to 31 October 2009** – The field assistant was injured when he rolled his 4WD on a straight sand road.

Bruise or contusion

- **Field assistant, arm/s, 27 days lost, 89 days off** – The downhole geophysical logging technician was injured travelling from the drill site to the exploration office when he lost control of the 4WD troop carrier he was driving and the vehicle rolled.

Infection

- **Field assistant, lower leg, 10 days lost, 11 days off** – The field assistant went to start soil sampling in a hilly, rocky and remote part of the Pilbara. He felt nauseous and was sweating profusely. His leg was hurting and swollen around a small abrasion sustained during soil sampling about ten days earlier, before his seven-day break. He had slipped on rocky ground and knocked his shin on rock. Until the incident ten days later, there had been no ill-effects and the abrasion was thought to be healing. He was taken back to the field camp and then an outpatients clinic in Port Hedland later that afternoon, where the leg was inspected and antibiotics prescribed. The leg was still sore and infected 5 days later so he went to a doctor in Perth, where the infected area was cut and cleaned, and more antibiotics prescribed.