

Hazard Alert

Working under elevated motor vehicles



Government
of South Australia

SafeWork SA

Summary of incident

A worker was fatally injured when hit and crushed by a falling vehicle axle assembly while it was being positioned ready for installation onto the vehicle.

The vehicle was supported on stands and elevated to a height that allowed the worker to lie underneath. The axle was temporarily unsupported in the final assembly position when it dislodged and fell onto the worker.

Background

Performing work under an elevated load presents various hazards that require appropriate risk control measures.

A motor vehicle must be supported by an appropriate vehicle hoist. Some components being removed or re-installed to the vehicle may require a separate means of support. These components for example may be physically too large, too heavy or too awkward to be controlled or manipulated manually by a worker when performing the task.

Loose components on a motor vehicle may be dislodged while performing maintenance tasks, especially where the vehicle is subjected to vibration, or unintended movement.



Example of a truck drive axle

Probable causes

- Axle was not restrained or adequately supported in position for the task
- Vibration source (e.g. pneumatic impact wrench) caused the component to slide out of position
- Worker positioned directly under the axle (load)
- Correct assembly sequence not followed

Action required

- Never work under an unrestrained load
- Always consider appropriate load support (e.g. stands or special cradles) that eliminate or minimise manual handling and the likelihood of the load falling
- Any load support should be clearly marked with its working load capacity
- Conduct a hazard identification and risk assessment for each task
- Develop and implement safe work procedures for maintenance/repair work on motor vehicles and ensure that all workers are informed and trained in these procedures

Further information

Code of Practice – Managing Risks of Plant in the Workplace

Working safely under Motor Vehicles being repaired – Health and Safety Executive (HSE – UK)

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