

RIDDOR accidental injury—lessons learned

Overview

A lead driller suffered a severed tendon in his little finger as a result of a freak accident using a retractable tape measure. The injury occurred during site investigation drilling works at night on a highway and it required surgery to stitch the tendon back together, resulting in 30 days of lost time.



What happened

The injured person (IP) was in the middle of a sampling run and was about to check the depth of the drill string at the time of the injury. The driller moved from his position in front of the controls to the cage where the tape was clipped. After unclipping the tape, the IP reeled out the tape with his right hand, when it suddenly snapped under its own weight and the end fell to the ground where it lodged under one of the rig's rubber tracks.

Using his right hand, with the tape resting on his fingers, he gave the tape a firm pull. As the tape became dislodged it recoiled quickly back into its housing causing a small laceration to the inside of his little finger.



What went wrong

Whilst the correct administrative controls were in place (The IP had attended a site induction, signed their briefing documents and task specific RAMS) the IP was not wearing the correct PPE (protective gloves) at the time of the injury.

Lessons learned

The sudden release of stored energy is a common cause of hand injuries in construction. Task specific RAMS stipulate the use of PPE (gloves) when drilling and had the IP been following wearing protective gloves at the time the injury would have been avoided. Care should be taken when retracting tapes and not allow them to recoil uncontrollably where they might whip or cut—They should always be fed in a controlled manner.



Since the injury, we have consulted with our lead drillers and we have learned that whilst the gloves we provide give excellent grip in the wet whilst keeping their hands dry they don't provide enough finger dexterity when operating the controls of the rig. This means that drillers tend to remove their gloves when stood at the controls.

We are currently looking at an alternative glove which increases hand/finger dexterity.

