



What happened?



During February 2023, a contractor was carrying out a shallow borehole whilst using a cable percussion drilling machine. The borehole was being completed by a fully competent VQ qualified Lead Driller with significant experience in cable percussion drilling. During the progression of this borehole, the Lead Driller was undergoing an Audit from the BDA.

During the course of the audit, it was identified that there was no guarding of the clutch – a dangerous part of the machine that must be guarded to be compliant with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998.

What went wrong?



Mechanical Causes

- No guard for the clutch was present on site.

Procedure Causes

- Failure of the daily/weekly inspection to sufficiently identify the missing guarding,
- Failure to report damage to plant and machinery team.

Outcome and Lessons Learnt



The BDA auditor immediately stopped the Lead Driller from drilling and informed both the BDA Audit Management and the driller's employer, and terminated the audit. The drilling machine was stood down until a guard could be fitted.

A toolbox talk was scheduled by the company for all operators of drilling machines to remind drillers of the importance of guarding all dangerous parts on drilling machines, in line with PUWER.

Despite a very experienced, fully qualified Lead Driller operating the machine with a documented inspection regime being implemented, the missing guarding was not identified.

The audit criteria requirement to check all drilling machine guarding may have prevented a serious incident. The machine would have continued to be used as the driller had not reported the serious nature of the missing guard to their plant and machinery team.

All dangerous parts on drilling machines must be guarded. On a cable percussion machine, these parts include (but are not limited to) the machine clutch, the capstan (if present), the main winch drum, the ancillary electric lifting winch

