



Wool press guarding

Employers and self employed people have general duties under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* (the OSH Act) and requirements under the *Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996*.

What the law says

Under the OSH Act, there is a general duty to ensure plant or machinery do not expose workers to hazards, as far as practicable. In addition, one of the requirements under the OSH regulations is to guard dangerous and moving parts of machinery, as far as practicable. Workers also have responsibilities under the OSH Act. They must work safely and avoid putting others at risk by anything they do or don't do.

Dangers of an unguarded wool press

Depending on the design of a wool press, crush injuries can occur from trapping hazards between moving and stationary parts if workers get their hands or other parts of the body or clothing caught during operation. Most injuries can be prevented if the wool press is fitted with guarding.

Hazards when using wool presses can include:

- a trip bar not fitted;
- worn hydraulic hoses;
- an interlocking door system not fitted or functioning;
- sharp edges on wool press;
- an emergency stop not fitted;
- high noise levels;
- use of the press by an untrained operator;
- poor design of the wool press;
- wool press positioned in main thoroughway; and
- a power lead located where the wool press can damage it.

Guarding

Fitting a guard to the wool press is the most effective way to prevent entrapment of a person's hand(s) or upper body.

Where they are practicable, the following hierarchy of guarding controls is considered appropriate for wool presses:

1. **Exclusion doors (interlocking doors)** – Heiniger, TPW and Aussie Express presses and other manufactured presses to be fitted with exclusion doors at manufacture or retro-fitted;
2. **Pressure sensing guards** (similar to the Heiniger Safety Stop Bar for the Slimline Press) – to be fitted to any other wool press together with an operating procedure;
3. **Electrical stop device** – where the above guarding is unable to be accommodated, an electrical stop device (mushroom button) of large dimensions and within reach of the press operator for ease of access (by hand, hip, leg or knee) to be fitted together with an operating procedure; and
4. **Mechanical stop devices** – to be fitted to all other presses where the above devices are not practicable. This may take the form of a fixed foot pedal or hand operated lever that will disengage the operating switch with an operating procedure also developed.

The highest level of safeguard should always be used, as far as practicable, so as to meet the duty to eliminate or reduce risks. All guarding devices must be working and properly adjusted when in operation.

See the following page for an explanation on what is considered 'practicable'

The design and construction of a physical guard

A physical guard needs to:

- prevent body parts and hair, or items such as clothing or jewellery, coming into contact with the rotating attachments;
- be solidly constructed and securely mounted;
- follow the contour of the machinery to prevent accidental activation;
- not be able to be by-passed or disabled;
- not allow the build-up of product;
- not create hazards associated with maintenance and cleaning; and
- not cause an injury in itself.

How do you work out if a guarding measure is 'practicable'?

If something is practicable, it is 'reasonably practicable', taking into account:

- the severity of any injury or harm to health that may occur;
- the degree of risk (or likelihood) of that injury or harm occurring;
- how much is known about the risk of injury or harm, and the ways of reducing, eliminating or controlling the risk; and
- the availability, suitability and cost of safeguards.

While cost may be a factor, the cost of putting safeguards in place is measured against the consequences of failing to do so. It is not a measure of whether the employer can afford to put the necessary safeguards in place, particularly when there is risk of serious, or frequent but less severe, injury.

Further information

This bulletin was developed by the Agricultural Safety Industry Advisory Group in conjunction with WorkSafe. The recommendations for safety in this bulletin apply until such time as relevant Acts and regulations change. Where new Acts and regulations are implemented, new guidelines will be developed.

For more information on wool press guarding, contact:

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