

General Workplace Inspectorate

Promoting Safety and Health in the Workplace

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT ALERT

10 February 2004

Brisket Roller Accident Results in Serious Harm Injury

Incident

An accident occurred in a Southland meat processing plant, on 21 January 2004, in which an employee suffered a serious harm injury to his hand. The victim was operating a rotating brisket roller at the time.

Circumstances

While some aspects of this accident are still currently under investigation, it is clear that the employee's thumb was entrapped in part of a brisket pelt, which was wound around the machine's spindle.

Although the hazards associated with rotating machinery are well known, at the time of this accident, this was the first instance of serious harm injury occurring on this type of machine that the OSH Southland Region has been made aware of.

Investigation

The brisket roller involved in this accident is a type commonly used in the New Zealand meat industry. It is believed that more than one manufacturer supplies this type of machine. The machine operation requires part of the brisket pelt to be inserted into a split spindle by hand. The machine can then be operated by depressing a button with the opposite hand. This causes the spindle to rotate which partially removes the pelt.

Recommendations

In the interim, known meat industry operators of this type of machine should have this accident brought to



A brisket roller of the type involved in this accident.

their attention and, where this type of brisket roller is in use, should be required to take the following immediate action:

- Where the potential for entrapment exists, revert to manual means of carrying out this task.
- Check with suppliers on the practicality of altering the machine to a two-button system. The company involved in this accident has implemented this measure.

The two-button system requires the operator to first press one button, which turns the spindle just enough to engage the pelt. Holding this button in, the operator must use the other hand to press the second button, which ensures both the operator's hands are clear of the pelt during the remainder of the operation. At any stage that either button is released the machine is programmed to return to the home position.