



Worker Badly Injures Finger on Automatic Meat Slicer



INCIDENT

An employee sliced off the pad of her index finger while trying to realign some ham that had slipped from the cutting blade of a Bizerba automatic meat slicer.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The employee was working in the Deli department of a store. One of her duties was to slice meat products using the Bizerba meat slicer. The machine is automatic and programmable. The product is placed on the machine and held in place with a product holder that retracts when all of the programmed slices have been cut. Sometimes, the product slips from the holder and needs to be realigned.

On the day of the accident, when the employee was using the machine to slice ham, it slipped away from the blade. The deli was quite busy at the time, with customers waiting for service. The employee decided not to turn the machine off before realigning the ham, and thought it would be all right to push the ham up against the blade with her fingers while the blade was moving. Her finger came in contact with the moving blade, slicing her finger.

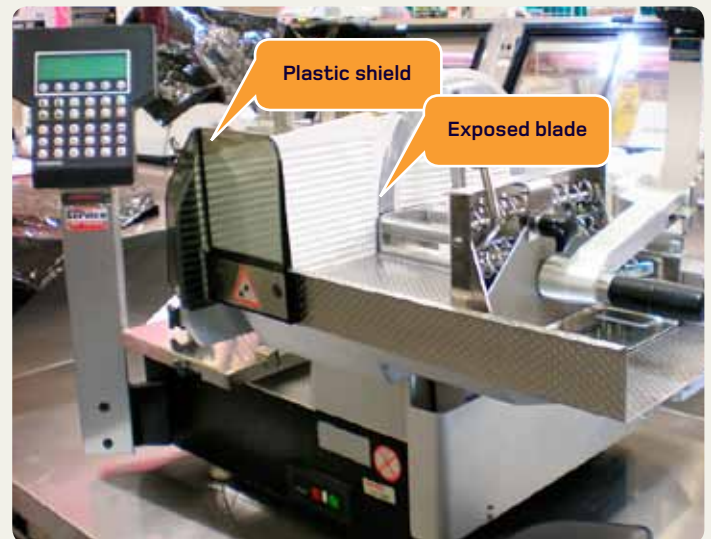
INVESTIGATION

There have been several incidents during the past two years using the same or similarly designed meat slicer. Although the Bizerba meat slicer is fitted with a plastic shield, this does not prevent employees from being exposed to the moving blade.

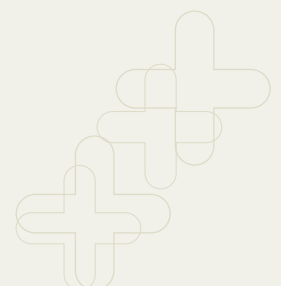
See picture 1

Instead of isolating the blade from the employees, the company minimised the hazard by training employees in the slicer's use, which still allows employees access to the sharp cutting blade.

Human behaviour is a factor when employees are exposed to the moving blade. If the employee believes that there is pressure from the customers to slice product quickly, they are less likely to follow the company procedure of turning off the machine before realigning the product. This has been identified as a factor in a number of similar incidents.



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▶ DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ADVICE FOR SAFEGUARDING THIS TYPE OF AUTOMATIC MEAT SLICER AND EQUIVALENT MACHINES

Minimising hazards on machinery does not effectively prevent accidents. Eliminating and isolating hazards through engineering control and safety measures will prevent harm and improve worker productivity.

An example of using engineering controls to isolate the hazard of the exposed blade is to fit an interlock guard. This prevents access to danger area when the machine operates, and is best practice in safeguarding employees from harm. When the guard is opened, the machine will immediately stop and cannot be operated until the guard is fully closed.

Guarding and safety interlock systems must comply with appropriate standards such as *AS4024.1-2006 (series): Safety of Machinery*, and the *Department of Labour Guidelines for Guarding Principles and General Safety For Machinery*. This guide can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.osh.govt.nz/order/catalogue/66.shtml>. Other equally effective methods of guarding will be acceptable provided they meet the requirements of the standards.

▶ WHICH INDUSTRIES/SECTORS OR MATTERS WILL THIS INFORMATION BE RELEVANT TO?

Supermarkets, deli stores, butchery departments, dairies.

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available to the Department of Labour at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.

TWO EXAMPLES OF INTERLOCK GUARDS

INTERLOCK GUARD FOR AUTOMATIC MEAT SLICER



INTERLOCK GUARD FOR AUTOMATIC MEAT AND BACON SLICER



The opening at end complies with standards that prevent a person's reach into the danger area.