



Membrane Skinner Accident

INCIDENT

A meat process worker was seriously injured while cleaning the blade and rollers of a membrane skinner.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The Townsend 9000A membrane skinner is used to remove the silver skin from small meat cuts such as poultry or lamb loins. The machine features a belt feed and interlocked cover to prevent the operator coming into contact with the blade and rollers. However, the blade and roller can be reached through a gap beneath the discharge belt.

It appears that the process worker had inserted his left hand into this gap to clean fat and oil from the blade and rollers when the machine unexpectedly restarted, causing multiple finger amputations and severe lacerations to his hand.

INVESTIGATION

Workplace Health and Safety has established that although the Townsend 9000A membrane skinner is guarded at the feed-end, the toothed roller can be reached from the discharge end (Photo A & B). This hazard has been identified on other types of membrane skinner. Subsequent improvements to guarding beneath the discharge belt have been made on this machine (see Photo C). Improvements of this kind could be made on other membrane skinner models.

GUIDANCE

Employers that use membrane skidders should check their machines to ensure that operators cannot access the blade and rollers. Employers should also ensure that there is a process in place to isolate and lock-out machinery during cleaning and maintenance.

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

Meat, fish, and poultry processors.

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.



1

Photograph 1 shows the position from where the blade and rollers can be reached from under the discharge belt.



2

Photograph 2 shows where the victim's hand contacted the roller; the intake belt would normally be adjacent to the roller, but is absent in this photograph.



3

Photograph 3 shows the interlocked door which contains a space for waste, and prevents access under the discharge belt.