

HEADS UP!!! SAFETY ALERT

Stem from Processor hits Fleeting Machine



Background:

- The main processor operator for the crew was away.
- A new processor operator was processing stems using full optimisation on the landing, with the fleeting machine clearing logs off the surge pile in front of the processor. A stick jammed in the processor measuring wheel, no length pulse was detected by the length encoder and the rollers continued to feed full stem through. Operator did not stop processor and the stem impacted the fleeting digger.
- The landing was perched on a ridge and was long, but narrow, meaning the processor and the fleeting machine operators were more confined than they may have usually been.
- The potential for a serious harm incident or property damage needs to be recognised by

harvesting crews when training up new operators in fully optimised harvesters.

What Happened:

- The processor operator and fleeting machine operator were not under any production pressure, in fact it was a “slow day”.
- The operator started processing a stem when a stick jammed in the measuring wheel; feed rollers continued to feed causing the majority of the full stem to feed out. The operator was unable to stop the machine in time.
- The stem hit the rear of the fleeting machine which was positioned in front of the end of the processing head some distance away.
- The fleeting machine received damage to the muffler, and the light on the rear, top side of the cab.
- This was a **close call** with **high potential** for a more serious outcome.
- It has been identified that many processor operators frequently experience a jam in the measuring wheel and the machine will continue to feed. Experienced operators are generally fast to pick up on this and hit stop or activate their trigger. Newer operators may not have exposure to this and might be slower to react. If another machine or skid worker is in the vicinity, there could be serious consequences.



Lessons Learned/Recommendations:

- This scenario could occur at any place/time/crew/machine brand, and if the operator is not quick enough to stop the feed the consequences could be serious or potentially fatal. With training, supervision and awareness this can be prevented.
- New operators need to be fully aware of all functions of their harvester. A thorough induction should be performed, including but not limited to:
 - Preparedness for a measuring wheel jam and awareness of what to look for
 - Emergency STOP button and use of trigger to stop feed (not all machines will necessarily stop feed if the trigger is held)
 - Branch rammer function etc (if this is turned on), this can cause the log to reverse feed back rapidly to clear the head if a jam is detected.
 - How the optimiser works i.e. it can **rapidly** revert back from a longer length (i.e. 6mtr) to a shorter length (i.e. 3mtr) at any time, so the operator needs to be aware of this and maintain plenty of distance between the head and the machine/other machines.
 - Chain shot zones and do not use saw when the saw bar is in line with cab or directly in front of a person/machine (15° hazardous zone)
 - Documentation and safety information from the manufacturer/provider of the machinery
 - How to work cooperatively with other machinery or people on the landing, who gives way to who etc...
 - Learning to be proficient on the processor takes time and doesn't happen overnight. The new operator needs to be put in an environment where there isn't significant production pressure so that they can take the time to learn. This role is not easy and a fully optimised system is fast - a new operator has to be able to multi-task; concentrate on the processor head; the screen; the position of the stem; the location of the other operators; any skid workers that might be on the landing; comms on the RT; sunstrike; chainshot zone; the daily cut plan; the list goes on. **Ensure that your new operators can be briefed on all functions and dangers of the machine.**
- Give thought to the **layout of the landing**, ideally before it is constructed. The more spacious and well thought-out a landing is, the easier/safer it is for all machinery operators to perform their tasks. If a landing is constrained by size or layout then in this instance it may not be suitable for a new operator.
- **Please discuss this at your next Tail Gate or H & S Meeting**

Important: The goal of Safety Alerts is not to apportion blame – it's to make sure we learn from incidents. If this type of event could impact safety in your operation, discuss and put in place appropriate measures to prevent future harm.