

# Caught in Roller System at a Sawmill Location

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Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance

To help TPA members avoid accidents resulting in injury or damage to property, the Timber Bulletin, in association with Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance, will publish details of actual incidents and what can be done to avoid such occurrences in the future. By sharing this information, TPA and LUA hope to make our industry as safe as possible.

## Background:

The work week at the sawmill started as it typically does, with nothing abnormal or out of place, when an employee was suddenly injured during the mid-morning

hours. This particular mill has mechanized its set-up in recent years to allow lumber decks and roller conveyors to move a large

## Lessons from Losses

portion of wood from one application to another.

Lumber/slab handlers assist the product flow in assigned areas. Personal protection for eye, ear, hands, etc. is enforced. Also, job rotation and monthly safety meetings are in place. In this situation the slab handler was using rubberized mechanics gloves

for hand protection.

## Operator:

The involved lumber/slab handler worked for this operation a little over one year and was considered trained for the position. This is a job position that rotates with other trained individuals.

## Accident and/or Injury:

On this Monday morning, the involved employee was moving back and forth along the roller conveyor deck behind the head rig carriage directing the flow of slabs. As the employee walked beside the deck, he placed his hand on top of a rotating roller. Before he realized what happened, his hand was pulled into the pinch zone between the roller and deck. Fortunately, the employee was able to pull his hand from the rotating roller. He received a serious laceration that required medical attention and stitches, but had no lost time. This is a situation where mechanization has improved lumber handling, but also brought forth other risks and/or hazards.

## Unsafe Act and/or Condition:

It is uncertain why this happened, however, here are some unsafe acts that may have contributed to this situation:

- Lumber/slab handler was using rubberized mechanic gloves for liquid protection which is not encouraged for this position. Rubberized gloves grip metal

and should not be worn around rotating rollers, pulleys, gears, etc.

- Lack of awareness, boredom, and not following work procedures.
- Not attentive, or being focused on the job.

The most logical cause of this injury was due to the employee laying his hand on top of a rotating roller, which caused the gloves to grip the roller and pull his hand into the deck. This personal injury could have been as serious as amputation or even death.

## Preventative Measures:

1. Enforce the use of smooth, loose-fitting gloves that do not tighten around the wrist and are not rubberized when working around rotating rollers, pulleys, etc. The proper safety gear for each hazard area needs to be reviewed.
2. Install complete guards/shields to prevent contact with the hazard area that is being protected. As processes change, regular self-inspection for improvements and efficiencies need review.
3. Restrict walkways next to hazard areas by installing barrier guards to prevent access to these problem areas. As mechanization takes place, attention needs to be given to areas where access points are restricted.
4. Install emergency shut-off



Pinch point on a roller system



Walkway next to live roller deck



**Quick release shut-off system**

controls for the operator and lumber/slab handlers at the start of the process equipment, the end of the lumber deck, and possibly work areas between.

Emergency shutdown push button switches, emergency pull shutdown controls, etc. are just a few examples of controls that can be incorporated into your process equipment.

5. Enforce proper work procedures when working in high hazard areas and other work situations. Attention to the job at hand and direct supervision of employee behavior need regular review.


6. Complete refresher employee training for proper work procedure, emergency response, etc. for all new and existing employees.

Weekly tool box safety meetings work well in reviewing all equipment, danger areas, proper shutdown procedures, etc. Cross training all employees is very beneficial.


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