

Seasonal worker pays the price

– The latest victim in a preventable workplace incident



In early 2021, a young worker's life took a tragic turn when a workplace incident resulted in severe injury. The victim had two fingers fractured on his left hand, and required surgery to partly amputate three fingers on his right hand.

The incident underscores the vital significance of health and safety training and procedures in any workplace.

The Consequences of Neglecting Safety:

The incident prompted legal proceedings and raised serious questions about workplace safety. The company in question was found to have failed in its health and safety responsibilities, which directly contributed to the unfortunate incident. An investigation revealed several crucial shortcomings that, if addressed, could have prevented this tragedy. Head on over to the WorkSafe news article for further detail on this specific incident. <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/news-and-media/preventable-injury-puts-seasonal-worker-safety-in-focus/>

Poor Safeguarding of Machinery:

One of the primary factors contributing to the worker's injuries was the inadequate safeguarding of the machinery involved. Machines lacking proper safety measures pose a significant risk to employees. Employers must ensure that all equipment is adequately safeguarded and routinely maintained to prevent accidents.

Inadequate Risk Assessment:

An essential aspect of workplace safety is conducting thorough risk assessments. In this case, an inadequate risk assessment failed to identify and mitigate the dangers associated with the task at hand. Regular, comprehensive risk assessments can help identify potential hazards and implement preventive measures.

Lack of Lockouts:

Another critical safety procedure missing in this incident was the absence of lockouts to safely isolate and de-energise machinery parts that could cause harm. Lockout/tagout procedures are vital in preventing accidental startups and ensuring worker safety during maintenance or repairs. [Training on isolations](#) could have easily eliminated this hazard.

The Broader Implications:

This incident emphasises the vulnerability of workers and the critical need for consistent health and safety measures across all employment sectors.

This includes the requirements for all workers on sight to be aware of the hazards around them.

Regardless of the nature of employment, employers must prioritise the safety and well-being of their employees. Seasonal workers, just like year-round employees, deserve the highest level of protection and care in their workplace.

The Way Forward:

An effective way to ensure workplace safety is by partnering with trusted health and safety professionals like Safety 'n Action (www.safetynaction.co.nz) to allow your Health and Safety Reps, Managers and Owners to know the safest way forward.

These experts specialise in training employees and PCBU's (owners, management teams) to operate equipment, manage site-specific safety measures and meet their obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

Conclusion:

The tragic incident serves as a solemn reminder of the paramount importance of health and safety training and procedures in any workplace. Preventable accidents should never occur. Employers should implement robust safety protocols, conduct regular risk assessments, and provide comprehensive training and ongoing upskilling.

By prioritising health and safety, we can protect the lives and well-being of workers, ensuring that they return home safely after each shift. It is incumbent upon all workplaces to uphold the highest standards of safety and to learn from past incidents to create safer environments for all employees.

Resources and Support for Businesses:

Training solutions

Hazard and Risk Management:

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/elearning/elearning-courses/online-hazard-and-risk-management/>

Isolations (Lockout Tagout)

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/our-courses/course-catalogue/isolations/>

Health and Safety Rep:

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/our-courses/course-catalogue/health-and-safety-representative-initial/>

Health and Safety at Work Seminar:

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/our-courses/course-catalogue/health-and-safety-at-work-seminar/>

First Aid:

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/our-courses/first-aid/>

Fire and Emergency Warden:

<https://www.safetynaction.co.nz/en/our-courses/course-catalogue/fire-and-emergency-warden/>

Relevant Legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/latest/DLM5976660.html>

Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2016/0013/latest/DLM6727530.html>