



SAFETY ALERT

November 13, 2006

HELI DRILLING INCIDENT

A driller's helper on a heli-portable seismic operation was injured when the worker's gloved hand was caught in the helicopter long-line hook mechanism as the pilot proceeded to lift the drilling unit. This resulted in the worker being lifted in to the air by the helicopter. The situation was quickly recognized by the pilot and the worker was set down, however, the incident resulted in injuries to the worker's left hand. This was a lost time injury.

The subsequent investigation revealed that the worker gave the signal to the pilot to lift prior to the worker's hand clearing the clevis. Additional cause factors included:

- The relative inexperience of the worker;
- Lack of a documented safe work procedure for who is responsible for signalling the pilot, how the pilot is signalled, and from what position.

Recommended measures for future prevention include the following:

- Formal, documented training/orientation should be conducted for all workers involved in heli-portable seismic operations. CAGC member companies should adopt a "Green Hard Hat" program similar to that used in other oil & Gas sectors. Such a program involves direct supervision and mentoring until such a time as the worker is competent to perform all anticipated duties safely.
- The applicable guiding document is the CAGC Heli-Assist/Heli-Portable Best Practices, however the "Safety Briefing" page 33, and "Sling Operations" page 36, do not adequately address safety issues in hooking/unhooking long-line loads. These articles suggest using a spotter with radio to communicate with the pilot, however, given the noise generated by the helicopter and probable requirement for ear protection, this does not seem like a practical solution. It is recommended instead that wording be inserted into the Best Practise stating to the effect that: "a hand signal to the pilot will NOT be given, nor will it be accepted by the pilot, until the ground worker responsible for hooking/unhooking is at the end of the tag line and all other workers are clear". This should be incorporated as a safe work procedure and orientation item for seismic drilling contractors.
- Recommended that seismic operation "prime contractors", as defined by Alberta OH&S, conduct selective pre-contract safety audits on sub-contractors with a view to verify orientation and safety training, job hazards analysis (as outlined in Alberta OH&S), and safe work procedures as per the CAGC Industry Best Practice for Heli-Portable Seismic Operations.

Previous CAGC Safety Alerts that directly bear on this incident are:

- 2003 – Tips and resources for Managing Green Workers;
- 2003 – Petroleum Safety Training versus IRP 16 Comparison;
- 2003 – Rapid Activity Alert; and,
- 2004 – Safety Training and Issuance of Certification.

These Safety Alerts should also be reviewed by seismic prime contractors, subcontractors and safety auditors.

For more information please contact the CAGC.