

Safety Alert



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Stevedore struck by timber during steel discharge

During the discharge of steel cargo, a stevedore was struck by a length of timber that was dislodged during lifting operations.

What happened:

Bundles of steel beams were being landed in an 'I' position onto a landing frame ready to be lifted by a forklift and placed on a tug and trailer for transport to storage (see Figure 1).

After a bundle of steel was landed onto the landing frame, timber dunnage was being removed from the top of the bundle to prepare it for transfer onto a tug and trailer.

While the stevedore was removing a length of timber, the forklift began to manoeuvre beneath the steel bundle. This caused one of the steel beams to shift from the 'I' to a 'H' position (see Figure 2), striking the piece of timber being handled by the stevedore. This resulted in the timber striking the stevedore, knocking them to the ground.



Figure 1 - Steel on the "I"



Figure 2 - Steel on the "H"

The stevedore sustained a fractured collar bone, three fractured ribs, and a head injury resulting in loss of consciousness. This incident highlights the importance of maintaining safe working distances and adhering to safe zones during cargo handling operations.

Key risks identified:

- **Proximity to moving loads:** The stevedore was positioned close to a load being manoeuvred by a forklift truck, outside of any designated safe area.
- **Inadequate communication:** The forklift operator began to move the steel bundle while the stevedore was in close proximity.
- **Movement of components within a load during handling:** Contact between the forklift and the steel bundle caused individual beams within the bundle to shift.

Considerations for members:

Members may wish to consider the following actions:

- Review safe systems of work and risk assessments to ensure the risk of personnel being struck during handling operations is addressed.
- Restrict pedestrian access to operational areas during cargo handling wherever practicable.
- Ensure landing and safe zones are identified and agreed prior to operation commencement.
- Ensure safe zones are clearly marked via physical barriers, markings, or visual indicators to separate personnel from moving plant and suspended loads.
- Require plant operators to stop immediately if personnel leave safe zones during lifting operations.
- Provide regular toolbox talks and safety briefings to all personnel and contractors on safe zone compliance and emergency stop procedures.

PSS would like to thank RMS Ports for sharing the details of this incident and the related learnings at the base of this alert.