

HAZCOM

HAZARD COMMUNICATION

Hazard

A hazard was created at Delaneys Rd Warranwood when two workers set out to use a vehicle snatch strap and a utility vehicle to pull two wooden gate posts from the ground. The use of a snatch strap for this task created potential for a flying projectile when the gate post failed under load.



Photo 1. The hazard from a re-enactment.

Incident

The snatch strap was attached to vehicle tow bar and the vehicle driven forward to draw the post out of the ground. Resistance was experienced and the post remained in place. The driver applied more power to the vehicle increasing the force in the snatch strap and onto the post. The increased force caused the post to break just above ground level and the contracting snatch strap propelled the post into the air.

The post impacted the front of the vehicle cab roof immediately above the driver denting the roof and smashing the windscreen. The post caused further damage to the vehicle bonnet before landing on the ground a few meters in front of the vehicle.

This was a dangerous incident with the potential to cause serious harm by being hit by the flying post or from fragments of broken glass and wood splinters. Fortunately no one was injured.



Photos 2 & 3. Vehicle damage. Note the proximity to the driver's position, splinters on windscreen exterior and the glass fragments on the dashboard.

How is this relevant to me and what do I need to do

It is important that the correct tools and equipment are selected and used for the task. Snatch straps are a vehicle recovery tool and should only be used for this purpose and by people trained in their use.

It is also important that all tasks are carried out using Safe Work Method Statements or task risk assessments. If these are not available for the task at hand, they must be prepared and must identify the risks and hazards to be addressed including the controls to be used to mitigate the risks.

In considering appropriate control measures and work method the Hierarchy of controls is to be applied (Eliminate, Substitute, Engineering / Isolation, Administrative, PPE) and you should seek effective ways to eliminate risks wherever possible. Prior to the task ask the **three Stay Safe Questions**,

- **What are we going to do?**
- **What can go wrong?**
- **How can we do it more safely?**