GN GUIDELINES NO.252

ANOTHER MITEK ADVANTAGE – JULY 2018

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Room to move

The acquisition of truss plant machinery is an important decision and its operational safety in the workplace is a major consideration.

All machine suppliers are required to provide a risk and hazard analysis with a machine. This document should identify any potential hazard/s and demonstrate either an engineered protective measure or a suitable procedure to prevent the hazard from causing injury. So is this enough?

Often the answer can be no. On visiting some truss plants recently, I have seen quite a few examples where machines have been installed and new hazards have been created through nothing more than the position in which they have been placed.

How does that happen? Well most of the time the problem is suitable access to and around the machine. The Australian Standard for machine safety AS4024.1803:2014 dictates rules around how much room is required for a machine to operate safely – including the allowance for space for the human body. In this article we'll concentrate on the rule regarding space allowance for a whole body, as this is the hazard I see the most often.

Machines in truss plants often have large moving components. These components can cause trapping or crushing points between the machine and anything stationary it passes by. Sometimes machines are located in such a way that they may miss a particular fixed object in the factory but missing the object isn't enough. I don't know about you but I'm

not paper thin. The human body requires space, and when we place machinery near a post or a wall where there isn't enough space for a human to fit through then that becomes a point where a person can be hurt.

The Australian Standard recognises this situation and specifies the minimum distance required. For most situations this is set at a distance of 500mm. That is, there needs to be a gap of at least 500mm between any moving part of the machine and any fixed object at any point along its range of travel.

The most common examples of this hazard I see are on presses. I have seen many an A-Frame type press or a table press where the moving component passes right past a factory wall or column, sometimes with just millimetres to spare. So how is this a hazard? These machines are often driven by one of multiple operators working on or near a jig/table and more often than not the operator is focused on the plates to be pressed and not who is standing in or around the machine they are controlling. It only takes a moment where one of the other staff members stands between the moving machine and the fixed object and the operator can drive the machine right into them. Given the size and weight of these machines, a serious or even fatal injury can occur.

Unfortunately, it doesn't matter that the supplied machine was deemed safe by the supplier and had all the appropriate design considerations and correct paperwork. If it is placed incorrectly in

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your factory, you will still have a problem.

Quite often a machine supplier will provide a set of recommendations about how much room is required for a particular machine. These recommendations should always be taken into consideration during installation. However, no matter the reason or context for the placement of the machine, if the situation in which the machine is installed creates a new hazard, then that becomes the responsibility of the truss plant.

If you have machinery in your plant where this kind of issue may be present, speak to your plate supplier for advice or, alternatively, engage a specialist safety advisor and ensure the plant is as safe as it can be. Give your machine the room it needs to move. **T**

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