



**DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT NO. 59**

**OFF-LOADING UNPALLETISED ARTICLES**

**INCIDENT**

A semi-trailer of mixed cargo was being unloaded in the warehouse yard at an ore processing and shipping site. Part of the cargo was two unpalletised, timber lagged, reels of electric cable weighing some 590 kg each. The reels were not supported on timber bearers and lay on their sides on the steel deck of the semi-trailer. One reel had been unloaded prior to the incident. The forklift operator could not get the forks under the second reel and the semi-trailer driver offered assistance by placing a wooden wedge under the reel when it was tilted by friction pressure of a fork on the side of the reel. This was being attempted when the reel fell trapping the driver's right hand between it and the timber wedge. The forklift operator quickly reversed the machine, got off it and ran between it and the semi-trailer to assist the driver.

The forklift moved forward, momentarily trapping the operator's head between the hoist tower and the coaming rail of the semi-trailer. The operator fell to the ground with severe head injuries. The semi-trailer driver, even though still trapped by the right hand, managed to avoid being caught between the forklift and the semi-trailer.

The forklift operator received a fracture to the base of the skull and other head injuries and the semi-trailer driver severe bruising to the right hand.

**COMMENT**

The warehouse yard was level and bituminised.

The only way the forklift could be made to move was in gear with the interlocked handbrake released.

All employees involved had long experience in this type of work.

Receival of unpalletised loads was not uncommon and was a source of complaint from employees.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Loads should be palletised whenever possible.
2. Procedures should be implemented for the handling of loads that cannot be palletised.
4. Forklifts should not be used for other than their design purpose. Special equipment may be necessary for handling unusual loads.
5. Plant and vehicles should not be left unattended unless parked in a safe manner.

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**SAFETY AWARENESS SAVES LIVES**