



**DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT NO. 61**

**CAUGHT IN A ROTATING DRILL ROD - FATAL ACCIDENT**

**INCIDENT**

A driller was found caught between the drill rod and the mast of a diamond drill exploration rig. Prior to the accident he was seen in a crouched position near the rotating drill rod apparently observing the return pulley and/or the pull-down mechanism to monitor the penetration rate. It was stated that he was not wearing any loose clothing. In the incident, he sustained serious head and internal body injuries to which he succumbed later.

**CAUSES**

- The driller was close to the rotating drill rod without any barrier between him and the hazard which this rotating shaft constituted.
- The driller was sitting near the edge of a temporary work platform on which he could slip or trip. This platform was adjacent to the mast and rod.
- The normal operating position of the driller was between 50 and 100 cm from the unguarded drill rod.

**PREVENTATIVE ACTION**

- A minimum safe distance between the operator and any moving part, including a rotating drill rod, should be maintained.
- The drill rod and other moving parts should be guarded or other effective hazard barriers should be in place.
- The work area around the rotating drill rod should be designed, constructed and maintained to avoid trip/slip hazards.

**COMMENT**

Although not thought to be a cause of this accident, drillers should be reminded of the need to wear tight fitting clothing whilst working on drilling rigs.

J M Torlach  
STATE MINING ENGINEER

7 September 1995

**SAFETY AWARENESS SAVES LIVES**