



SAFETY ALERT

Angle Grinder Arm Slash

Name:

Date Read:

WHAT HAPPENED

On a Sunday afternoon a Farm Manager decided to do some maintenance on their feed-out wagon in preparation for the coming winter season. While cutting some steel with an angle grinder, the grinding wheel came loose from the body of the grinder, escaping the guard on the grinder. It slashed through the Farm Manager's left arm, stopping at the bone. There was significant blood loss and required 7 hours of surgery. This is a serious injury and will need a lengthy recovery.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN

It wasn't clear what allowed the grinding wheel to come loose, but it would have been either the locking tension becoming loose due to vibration, or it was due to the grinding wheel being incorrectly replaced. No pre-work check was done on the grinder because the Farm Manager assumed it was a short job. While they did notice that the blade was new and assumed another team member must have recently replaced the grinder wheel, they didn't check the grinding wheel was under the correct tension. The grinding wheel guard was in place and in working order. It did deflect the wheel away from body, but it was still able to deeply cut the left arm because the arm was slightly in front of the grinder wheel.

KEY LESSONS

- Even when the job seems simple or quick, run through a safety check to identify the risks, and work out how you'll manage them. Familiarity can make us too relaxed about risk.
- Check tools yourself before each use and don't assume they are in good condition because someone recently used them.
- Never position your arm, leg, or body in front of a rotating angle grinding wheel.
- Check that the correct flange and locking nut is in place for the type of grinding wheel being used. Too small blades will rotate at too high a speed. Check the guard and handles are secure and check power cords and batteries are in good condition.
- Do regular maintenance on all farm power tools e.g. chainsaws, brush cutters, grinding wheels in woolsheds, drills, saw benches, skill saw, and concrete cutters.
- Take a few minutes to make sure the whole team knows how to maintain power tools on farm and make sure everyone knows what to look for. Here's a quick video on changing a grinding wheel properly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toFCMaJbzmA>.



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