

SERIOUS INJURY ACCIDENT: October 2016

Driller Injured By Hydraulic Oil Infusion

On October 20, 2016, a driller with approximately ten years of mining experience was seriously injured while troubleshooting a hydraulic leak on a Gill Beetle drilling rig. As the driller was trying to determine which one of several hydraulic hoses was leaking, he inadvertently placed his hand over the leak and a stream of oil, leaking under high pressure, caused a penetrating cut to his left index finger. The driller returned to work after getting first aid. By the end of the day his left hand was swollen and painful. The driller went to an immediate care facility for evaluation and treatment, but they referred him to the local hospital emergency room where they diagnosed that oil had penetrated the driller's hand through the small cut on his finger. On October 21st, the driller met with an orthopedic specialist who admitted him to the hospital for surgery the following day to clean out the wound and remove oil damaged tissue. The driller was treated with antibiotics overnight and, because of their apparent effectiveness, surgery was postponed to allow the antibiotics more time to work. On October 23rd, the doctor cancelled the surgery after concluding that the antibiotics were successful at treating the infection and the driller was released from the hospital. After follow up visits with the doctor, the driller returned to work on October 31st.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The hydraulic oil in this incident was a partially biodegradable type. The doctor concluded that the antibiotics were likely so successful at treating this injury because the oil was biodegradable. The injury may have been more serious with other types of oil and surgery most likely would have been necessary.
- All miners performing maintenance or repair work should be aware of the dangers that oil under pressure represents and the serious injuries that may result.
- This accident, the factors that led to it, and its results should be reviewed with all mine personnel.
- Mine operators are reminded to report accidents to DMM as soon as the seriousness of an injury is apparent.

