Company Owner Killed by Exploding Tire

The owner-operator of a heavy equipment maintenance business died because he undid the wrong bolts while trying to remove a tire.

The victim was removing a wheel from a test roller for repair. A test roller is a large two-wheeled cart that holds about 60,000 pounds (27,216 kilograms) of concrete weight. The unit is used in highway construction to test the road surface. The wheels are five or six feet (1.5 meters to 1.8 meters) in diameter, and each rim is in three parts.

The man was removing wheel nuts with an air impact wrench. Instead of removing the nuts to get the wheel off the hub, he unknowingly removed the nuts that dismantle the rim. It exploded, and the victim was struck by part of the rim. He was thrown approximately 45 feet (13.7 meters) and suffered multiple traumatic injuries.

Despite the man’s extensive experience around industrial equipment, he was unfamiliar with this kind of tire. He should have contacted the manufacturer to get specific instructions.

Ideally, split rim and axle bolts should be incompatible so split rims are identified from axles and require different tools. But it is dangerous to take chances with equipment you don’t know about. Only personnel familiar with and trained in controlling the hazards of split rim tires should attempt to remove or repair them.