Drive Shaft Strikes Operator

A worker on a portable sawmill was killed when he was hit in the head by an unguarded drive shaft that had been displaced by the impact of heavy equipment working in the area.

A mobile log loader machine backed into a sawmill and knocked it off its support blocks. This allowed the unguarded, rotating drive shaft between the sawmill and the generator to break free and hit the victim.

The operator of the log loader was backing up the machine in poor visibility when the collision occurred. The drive shaft was not protected by a guard to prevent it from breaking free and flying away from the portable sawmill and generator.

A temporary barrier around the portable mill could have prevented this fatal injury.

To avoid this and other types of injuries involving portable sawmills, consider the following guidelines:

- Block and level all sawmill components properly to prevent movement from vibration and impact.
- Maintain and inspect all equipment regularly.
- Keep all electrical connections and cables in good repair.
- Keep adequate guarding on the saw blade to prevent accidental contact with workers.
- Wear the proper personal protective equipment, including hardhats, safety boots, eye protection, hearing protection and hand protection.
- Maintain adequate lighting in the work area.
- Make sure the power generator has an easily accessible kill switch so it can be turned off instantly.
- Have a fully charged fire extinguisher immediately available.
- Keep an adequate first aid kit. Have a means of summoning help and have emergency transportation available.