Electric Tools – Grounds for Concern Fatality Report

Hand injury from portable handheld Angle Grinder

What happened?

A worker was injured whilst cleaning equipment using a portable handheld angle grinder fitted with a wire brush. The rotating brush caught an edge and kicked into the worker’s gloved left hand. The glove was pulled into the rotating wire brush resulting in a deep abrasion to the hand.

What were the causes? What went wrong?

- The task risk assessment was incomplete.
- The grinder was being used without the side grip handle fitted;
- No consideration was given to where to place the hand relative to the rotating brush;
- Given the operator’s position, the grinder could not be used safely. The operator should have moved to the other side of the component to complete the task, and deployed the grinder in a horizontal position;
- There was no formal power tool / abrasive wheel training in place;
- There was inadequate supervision of the task.

Lessons learned

- Equipment should be safe and without risks to the operator (that is, complete, with safeguards fitted and free from defects). [This is a regulatory requirement in many places];
- Appropriate supervision is essential;
- Reliance was placed on experience and ‘on the job’ training rather than on formal training and competence evaluation.

Actions

- Task risk assessment amended to include all hazards and control measures;
- Angle grinder side grip handle obtained and fitted, and its use made mandatory as company policy;
- Review of power tool/abrasive wheels training and competency evaluation requirements;
- Supervisors’ responsibilities discussed and reaffirmed.