Oil Field Worker Struck By Pump Jack Head

A 24-year-old floor hand died from massive chest trauma from a falling pump jack head.

What happened?

The victim and three co-workers were working to replace the downhole pump, which required removal of the horsehead. As the workers attempted to secure the winch line to the horsehead, the line caught the horsehead jack screw and pulled the head off the walking beam of the pump jack.

The falling horsehead struck the victim in the chest and also struck another floor hand, causing a nonfatal head injury. The victim died 28 days later as a result of his injuries.

Why it happened

The horsehead was not secured to the walking beam with a properly installed clamp bolt.

Don’t let it happen to you

Investigators concluded that, in order to prevent similar incidents, employers should:

- Ensure that the pumping unit horsehead is tightened, locked and/or latched securely in place with properly installed jack screws and clamp bolt.
- Use tag lines to position the horsehead when removing or lowering, and to keep personnel clear of the suspended load.
- Develop written safety procedures for securing and removing well parts using the hoisting system to reduce the chance of fall, overhead and struck-by hazards during maintenance and servicing.
- Ensure that all employees are trained to recognize and control associated hazards.

- Develop a system to monitor activities and assure the safe operation of machinery and equipment on jobsites.