

01-02: Falling Cones



SAFETY BULLETIN 01-02

February 21, 2001

Falling Cones

INFORMATION

Federal Regulations in 29 CFR 1918.85(j)(ii) require that after July 26, 1999 the employer has to ensure that "positive container securing devices" (Semi Automatic Twist Locks and hanging safety stackers) are used to secure containers. These devices were required to reduce the requirements for men and women to work aloft on top of containers.

While they have reduced the numbers of trips aloft to place and remove cones, other dangers have emerged from their use. These devices are inserted into the container on the dock before they are lifted aboard, that means they are lifted high and swung aboard the ship with the container. There have been an increasing number of reports that some of these cones have fallen out of the container and bounced to the deck of the ship or to the dock. Workers have been injured by these falling cones. This Safety Bulletin is an alert to this situation, and a reminder to keep clear as required in the PCMSC.

There appears to be a number of reasons that the cones are falling out:

They are not inserted properly or completely before the lift.

The cones are not operating properly due to rust or corrosion, congealed grease, or damage so they do not twist completely into place.

Side impacts of one container hitting another as they are stowed knock them out.

Transitions of the container from a vertical direction of travel to a stop or from a vertical direction of travel to a horizontal transition while suspended.

Upon lifting if the cone has been released or inserted improperly.

The PCMSC contains several rules to protect workers from falling objects.

Rules 650 and 651 require the wearing of hard hats and safety toed shoes when there is the danger of falling objects.

Rules 653, 1049, 1509(f) and 1513 prohibit working under the load or nearer than 5 container slots away (offshore) from a container being worked.

Rule 1502 requires workers to transit the holds being worked on the outboard side of the vessel.

Rule 658 and 1156 require precautions when Semi Automatic Twist Locks are installed or removed from suspended containers.

Rule 627 requires the immediate reporting of tools or equipment that are defective or unsafe and the marking of such equipment to prevent use until repaired.

Rule 1508 prohibits dropping or throwing lashing bars or cones from above.

Recently, several injuries have been avoided through the protection provided by PPE.

There have been several close calls. Several workers have been hit by falling cones. Fortunately for some, they were protected by their hard hats and/or safety toed shoes.

It is very important that the cones be positioned and seated correctly. When inserting the cones workers should always be reminded not to put their hands into the bight. (Rule 658 & 1156) This is especially important when inserting and removing cones when the container is on a bombarc.

Once inserted, the workers should give the cones a shake to ensure that they are seated. If a cone is "sticky" or doesn't swivel or snap back readily or pops out when it is shaken, then it should not be used. Per Rule 627, workers should report the defective cone to supervision and segregate it until it can be repaired. Cones should always be inserted with the correct end up so that upon unlocking, the cone does not fall out.

Unfortunately some persons have been struck by falling cones. Some of these accidents were preventable, because these workers were working too close to the crane and active cell. At least four PCMSC Rules prohibit working closer than half the stack width or at least 5 cells off shore of a crane working an active cell. Rules also require walking on the outboard side of the hatch being worked.

All our safety rules were jointly developed based on the experience of the joint coast safety committee. They are in place to prevent future accidents. Unfortunately, people are still getting injured because they are violating the rules.

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ACTION

Employers and supervision should be mindful of the growing concern of falling cones. Employers and supervision should stress the wearing of PPE safety equipment as appropriate; reinforce that defective equipment should be reported and taken out of service; and remind workers to stay well clear of containers being lifted with cones attached. We have enough rules. We have the right rules. We need to follow them.