LTI: Leg injury while using hand-held grinder

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A worker suffered a leg injury whilst using a hand-held grinder.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:

- Bypassing safety controls
- Line of fire

What happened?

A worker suffered a leg injury whilst using a hand-held grinder. The incident occurred when the worker was cutting wood with a wood-cutting disc installed. On the third cut, the grinder slipped from his hand, fell to the floor, and bounced back, hitting his right calf. The worker's supervisor was able to quickly switch off the power, and the worker was taken to the hospital for treatment.

This incident caused a deep cut about 10 cm long, damaging muscle and tendon, and fracturing the bone, which required surgery and a metal pin.

Reconstruction

What went right?

- The supervisor quickly switched off the grinder's power, preventing further injury.
- First aid was immediately applied to control the bleeding, which helped stabilize the injured person.
- The injured person was transferred to the hospital within minutes, enabling timely surgery and reducing complications.
- The supervisor informed the Master and Operations Manager quickly, ensuring proper reporting and coordination.
- At the time of the incident the injured person was fit for duty (healthy, rested and free from alcohol or drugs).

What could have prevented the incident from

occurring?

- Using the right tool for the right job: a hand-held grinder, even with a wood cutting disc installed, has the high risk of kicking back. Better, safer, more appropriate tools could have been made available.
- Discussion of the hazards of using a grinder for wood cutting could have been part of the toolbox talk – in this case, it wasn't discussed.
- Not feeling "perceived" pressure to get the job done quickly: the crew naturally wanted to complete the job quickly, so instead of using a hand saw, they chose to use a handheld grinder.

Lessons to learn

- Take time to think through the task before starting. Challenge the usual thinking. Are we really saving time by doing the job this way rather than doing it the safe way?
- Use the right tool for the right job.

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