Finger injury caused during maintenance of rotating machinery

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Although the electrical supply was isolated, a V-belt continued to rotate due to residual mechanical energy.

IOGP Life Saving Rules:

Energy isolation

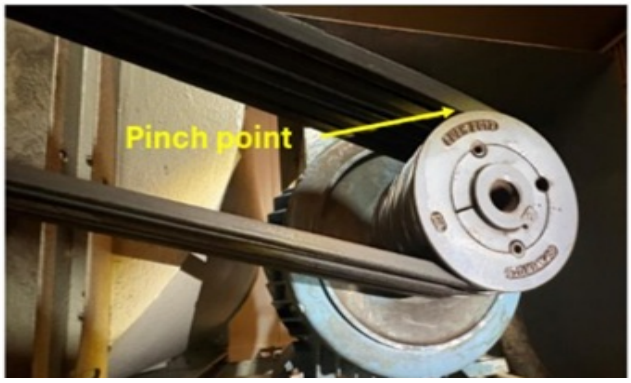
What happened?

A crew member was repairing a broken grease nipple on an Air Handling Unit. Although the electrical supply was isolated, the V-belt continued to rotate due to residual mechanical energy. While manually attempting to restrain the belt, two fingers were drawn into the pinch point between the V-belt and pulley, causing a laceration and hairline fracture to the fingertip. The case was considered a Restricted Work Case (RWC) based on the medical practitioner's report, with a High Potential (HIPO) — a more severe outcome could have resulted in loss of a finger or fingers.





Note that the reenactment was conducted in a controlled environment under safe conditions and was performed for investigation purposes only



What can we learn?

- Electrical isolation alone does not guarantee a zero-energy state; residual

mechanical energy should be verified and controlled by an authorized and competent person, before work begins.
- “Lone working” during tasks involving energised machinery / equipment should be discouraged and avoided where possible.
- Never manually stop or restrain rotating machinery — allow it to come to a complete stop or secure it by an approved method.
- Don’t rely on generic risk assessments – what are the job-specific details here? What are the job-specific and task specific controls that might have prevented this injury?
- Ensure appropriate glove selection is considered during the risk assessment (i.e., impact protection).

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