

INCIDENT TYPE:

DRIVER INJURED DURING DESLUDGING OPERATIONS



Recently a tanker driver was seriously injured while carrying out desludging operations at a Waste Water Treatment Plant.

As the driver was desludging a Rotating Biological Contactors (RBC) it appears that a choke occurred in the flexible pipe that was attached to the tanker. The driver then followed standard procedures for unblocking the choke. He closed the tanker inlet valve and opened the vacuum breaker valve to relieve the pressure in the hose. The tanker continued to run in order to maintain vacuum pressure in the tank and as the driver re-opened the main tanker valve to free the choke the tanker hose kicked violently, hitting him in the leg and knocking him to the ground.

As a result of this the driver sustained a broken lower leg and damage to the ligaments and will be off work for up to six months.

Although the severity of this particular incident was extreme, it is known that tanker hoses can kick while under pressure during certain operations. It is believed that one of the contributing factors to this particular incident was the length of the flexible hose attached to the tanker which was approximately 20m long allowing the hose to flex more readily under pressure.

The incident has highlighted the need for extreme care to be taken when carrying out this type of operation especially where long lengths of flexible hoses are being used.

Currently there is a project to install fixed tanker draw-off points across Scotland which will help to reduce the need for long lengths of flexible hoses to be used.



The picture above shows the long length of flexible hose involved in the incident.

If you are involved in this type of design please ensure that you follow this guidance:

- Always use as short a length of flexible hose as possible
- Stand as close as possible to the rear of the tanker or to the side of the vehicle when operating the valves
- Where possible always clear chokes manually, if unable to do this change the flexible hose

Can you please ensure that all staff involved in this type of operation are made aware of this incident and the guidance to be followed.