

Failure of Lifeline/Fall Arrest Equipment

Mine Type: All Mine Types

Incident: A member of a blast crew at an underground metalliferous mine connected himself to a retractable lifeline / fall arrest equipment and started walking towards the top of an open stope when the cable of the lifeline snapped in his hand just above the retraction stop ball. The blast crew member had not reached the safety barricade when the incident occurred, however the same lifeline had been used earlier in the shift.

Equipment: Retractable steel cable lifeline which had been manufactured approximately 12 months prior to the incident.

Hazard: Failure of lifeline cable causing possible fall from height.

Cause: Steel cable was corroded, had not been tested and no pre-use inspection was undertaken.



Comments:

There were several contributing factors to this high potential incident:

- Not following procedures - using a retractable lifeline without conducting an adequate pre-use inspection.
- Using defective equipment - using a retractable lifeline that was corroded and should not have been in service.
- Inadequate warning system – the out of date inspection tag was not identified prior to use.
- Poor housekeeping - the carry bag was in poor condition and contained small quantities of water and mud.

Recommendations:

- Careful consideration by way of a risk assessment should be completed before purchase to ensure equipment is fit for purpose and able to withstand a range of prevailing environmental conditions.
- Include fall arrest equipment on the equipment register to ensure all such devices are captured by periodic maintenance inspections. Using a colour coded tagging system can show whether items are within period of allowable use since the last formal inspection.
- Use a formal pre-use inspection checklist to reinforce appropriate serviceability inspection by the user.

Rob O'Sullivan

Manager Safety and Health – North Region

Contact: Rob O'Sullivan, Manager Safety and Health, +61 (07) 4760 7408

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