

Summary

A contract rope access technician broke his arm when it became entangled in a drilling rig, provided by QTS Group Ltd. He was assisting the drilling rig operator with the installation of soil nails to a railway cutting slope.

Installation of a soil nail requires the drilling of 4 or 5 lengths of steel reinforcement bars (rebar), approximately 4 or 5cm in diameter and 1 or 2m in length, horizontally, or at a slight angle, into the ground.

The incident occurred when a new rebar was being fitted to the drilling rig by the injured person (IP). Each rebar must be attached to the drilling rig (to the drilling head) by hand, and as such, it is necessary to access the drilling head. There was no guarding around the drilling head, only around the rest of the drilling rig and whilst the IP was attaching the rebar, the drilling rig operator placed the drilling rig's pendant control box on top of the drilling rig's fixed guard (cage) and walked away, to collect another rebar for later use. Whilst the IP was fitting a new rebar, the drilling rig unexpectedly started, twisting, and breaking the IP's forearm, leaving him entangled on the drilling rig. It appears that the control box fell on the floor, activating the control switch.

The control box's shroud (guard) was inadequate in preventing this, the drilling rig's fixed guard (cage) was not adequate to prevent access to the moving parts, and there was no interlocking, nor were there any emergency stops within reach of the IP when he was entangled. The drilling rig operator ran back, picked up the control box from the ground and stopped the drilling rig, releasing the IP from his entanglement.

Company

QTS Group Limited

Breaches involved

1. Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Section 3(1)
2. Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 Regulation 11(1)

Date(s) of offence

13 October 2017

Plea

Guilty

Result

Company fined by Sheriff

Court

Jedburgh Sheriff Court

Sentencing date

10 May 2021

Penalty

1. £6 000 fine for the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 offence
2. £6 000 fine for the Provision & Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 offence

Costs

Not awarded in prosecutions in Scotland

Location of offence

Address:

Lineside railway embankment near Lamberton, Scottish Borders

ORR details

ORR Team: Scotland Region Health & Safety Team

ORR Directorate: Railway Safety Directorate