

Lathe Operator Killed by Rotating Shaft



What happened?

A lathe operator was struck in the head and killed by a stainless steel rod extending from the back of a metal lathe.

The incident appears to have happened just after the operator activated the lathe, setting the speed to 1,000 revolutions per minute (rpm). The stainless steel rod, 1" in diameter, was secured to the clamp in the lathe and was sticking out roughly 48" from the back of the machine. The excessive length of material extending from the lathe and the high rpm created a wobble effect that caused the shaft to bend nearly 90 degrees, spinning it like a propeller.

It is presumed that the worker was at or near the controls of the lathe when this happened and did not stop the machine. The operator apparently walked towards the back of the lathe and was struck in the head by the rapidly spinning bent steel rod.

What can you do to prevent this from happening at your workplace?

- Cut power before going to the back of the machine.
- Avoid having excessive material sticking out the rear of a lathe or add support stands that hold the excess material when needed.
- Conduct a job safety analysis (JSA) for those who must work on or around the hazard area. A JSA is a systematic method for identifying hazards associated with the job or task which can in turn help identify special training needs associated with the work.
- Train your workers on the hazards that have been identified.

Need more information?

Go to [Get Started With Safety & Health](#) for information on safety and health, rules and policies, sample programs, and general assistance.

This bulletin was developed by L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health to alert employers, labor groups, and employees of a tragic loss of life. The information in this bulletin is based on preliminary data and does NOT represent final determinations of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

Interested in a free safety consultation at your workplace?

The Department of Labor & Industries provides consultations, training, and technical assistance at no cost to employers. Call today to schedule a free confidential consultation or go to [Request Consultation](#) for more information. You may also call 1-800-423-7233 or visit a local L&I office and ask for the Consultation Manager.

How does an employee file a complaint?

Employees or employee representatives may file formal complaints with DOSH when they believe a safety or health hazard exists in their workplace. Complaint forms are available from your local L&I office in both English and Spanish, or on the Web at [Safety Complaints](#)

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