

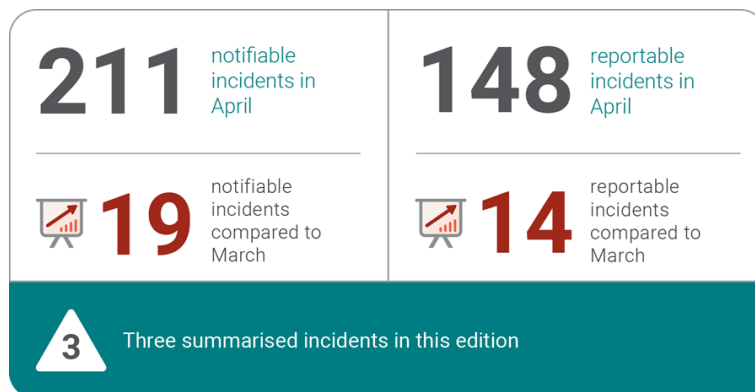
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Monthly incident insights WorkSafe Mines Safety

April 2026 edition

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Note: Correct as of 14 May 2026.

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Recent prosecutions

Court fines mining company \$575,000

Mining company Wiluna Operations Pty Ltd has been fined \$575,000 after an apprentice mechanical fitter suffered a permanent spinal injury and became a paraplegic when a wheel assembly weighing more than 750 kilograms fell on him.

Wiluna Operations pleaded guilty to contravening sections 9(1), 9A(2) and 15C of the *Mines Safety and Inspection Act 1994* (MSI Act). The company failed to provide and maintain a working environment that, as far as practicable, did not expose its employees to hazards. Wiluna Operations' failure caused serious harm to the apprentice, who through a labour hire arrangement was performing work for the company under the supervision of a Wiluna Operations-employed heavy diesel mechanic in the mine site's mechanical workshop. The contraventions of Wiluna

Operations of the MSI Act were assessed as if the apprentice, who was 18 years old at the time of the incident, was a direct employee of the company.

Read the [media release](#) for more information about the prosecution.

Reportable incidents

Drill-boom fall exposes worker to line-of-fire risk

During maintenance on an underground long-hole drill rig, a drill boom suddenly fell and struck a worker, knocking them from their work platform to the ground. The drill's horseshoe frame partially arrested the boom's descent, preventing it from fully collapsing onto the worker. The worker then self-extricated from beneath the structure.

At the time of the incident, workers had secured the drill boom using a come-along device and already removed some bolts or fasteners holding it in place. The securing device failed under load, allowing the boom to drop unexpectedly.

Although the worker did not sustain life-threatening injuries, the incident exposed them to a significant line-of-fire hazard and carried clear potential for fatal consequences.

Takeaways

- **Avoid relying solely on temporary restraint devices:** Come-alongs and similar tools may not provide adequate load security.
- **Use engineered supports:** Deploy rated, purpose-designed systems to prevent uncontrolled movements of suspended or partially dismantled components.
- **Eliminate line-of-fire exposures:** Keep workers out of fall zones and away from inadequately secured loads.
- **Conduct thorough pre-task assessments:** Identify load weights, centres of gravity and appropriate securing methods before starting jobs.
- **Sequence fastener removals:** Ensure redundant supports are in place before releasing any components that may shift or fall.

Summary

Maintenance work on underground plant equipment involving suspended or partially supported components carries significant risks of crushing injuries and fatalities. Inadequate load-securing arrangements and insufficient planning can result in sudden, high-consequence incidents. To prevent serious injuries or fatalities, implement effective load-support systems, eliminate line-of-fire exposures, conduct rigorous risk assessments and promote strong safety intervention behaviours.

Striking tasks eject metal shards and injure workers

Maintenance teams continue to face a serious and preventable hazard: metal fragments ejected during striking tasks. Incidents have occurred during the removal and installation of bucket teeth—known as ground-engaging tools (GET)—as well as hinge pins and locking pins. When workers strike these components, metal shards can break free and travel at high speed.

These incidents have injured field service and maintenance fitters, with metal fragments embedding in legs, groins, arms and necks, often requiring medical treatment. These events highlight the serious consequences of uncontrolled line-of-fire exposures and demonstrate how quickly routine tasks can escalate into high-risk situations.

Investigations show that maintenance teams often underestimate this hazard. In several cases, workers used incorrect or poorly maintained tools, bypassed original equipment manufacturer (OEM) instructions or site procedures or worked without adequate supervision and task planning.



Takeaways

- **Eliminate line-of-fire exposures:** Remove non-essential personnel from work areas and position workers outside impact zones.
- **Plan tasks thoroughly:** Conduct risk assessments and review work practices to reduce the probabilities and consequences of projectile hazards.
- **Use correct tools:** Select well-maintained and properly dressed tools suitable for tasks, including soft-face hammers where appropriate.
- **Ensure competency and supervision:** Train and assess workers and actively supervise them during high-risk maintenance tasks.
- **Apply engineering controls:** Use mechanical aids to reduce manual striking and deploy ballistic shielding where workers cannot eliminate projectile risks.
- **Wear appropriate personal protective equipment:** Follow OEM instructions and site procedures, including the use of face shields and protective clothing.

Summary

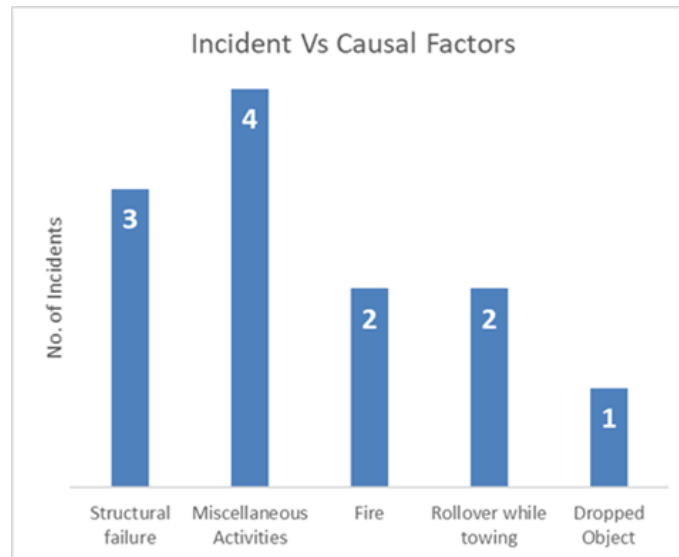
Maintenance activities involving striking tools can produce high-energy projectiles capable of causing serious or fatal injuries. These risks are well known and foreseeable. Preventing such incidents requires eliminating line-of-fire exposures, using correct tools, maintaining effective supervision and implementing robust planning and engineering controls. Managing projectile risks is a shared responsibility that demands disciplined adherence to safe work systems to ensure every worker returns home safely.

Tower incidents highlight structural and operational hazards

A review of lighting tower incidents reported across Western Australia over a 13-month period has identified recurring hazards, common failure modes and systemic gaps in asset management. The incidents included structural failures, fires, dropped objects and injuries sustained during routine handling and towing activities, many of which had the potential to cause serious or fatal outcomes.

Structural failures were the leading cause of high-potential incidents, with multiple cases involving failed pivot components, collapsing masts and corrosion-driven instability. Electrical faults ignited fires in several towers, while a detached solar panel created a significant dropped-object hazard. Workers also sustained hand and finger injuries during set-up, pack-down and towing tasks.

These incidents show how quickly routine lighting tower operations can become high risk when mine operators do not prioritise inspection, maintenance and task planning. They reinforce the need for consistent procedures and effective controls to manage both mechanical and operational hazards.



Takeaways

- **Implement routine inspections:** Establish and document regular structural inspections to identify corrosion, wear and component fatigue.
- **Remove defective equipment from service:** Repair or replace damaged, worn or compromised components promptly.
- **Verify structural integrity before use:** Conduct thorough pre-start inspections prior to operations, relocations and pack downs.
- **Apply safe towing practices:** Follow documented procedures to prevent instability, rollovers and trailer detachments.
- **Assess task-specific risks:** Identify hazards during set-up, pack-down and handling activities, with a focus on pinch points and manual tasks.
- **Eliminate line-of-fire hazards:** Keep workers clear of collapse zones, suspended components and dropped-object risks.
- **Maintain electrical systems:** Inspect and test wiring and components regularly to detect faults

and reduce fire risks.

- **Standardise procedures:** Develop and implement consistent processes for operating, relocating and maintaining lighting towers.

Summary

Lighting tower incidents continue to present risks of serious injuries and fatalities, particularly where teams do not manage structural integrity, inspection regimes and operational controls effectively. Structural failures, fires, dropped objects, towing incidents and routine handling hazards can result in sudden, high-consequence events. Preventing these incidents requires consistent inspection and maintenance activities, clear and standardised procedures, task-specific risk assessments and competent supervision. Proactively identifying and controlling hazards during lighting tower operations will reduce the likelihood of repeat incidents and help protect workers from serious harm.

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