

Spotter struck in face by winch cable

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What happened?

A winch truck was being unloaded from a float trailer in preparation for a rig move. The winch was centrally located behind the cabin of the truck and the winch line was extended and secured to a main bed roll pin by a lift sling. During the unloading, the winch power take-off (PTO) switch (which drives the winch) engaged the winch, tightening the winch line, which bent the pin and released the line under tension. The released line whipped around, glancing a spotter in the face who was standing beside the winch truck. No significant injury occurred to the spotter.

How did it happen?

A mechanical failure of an interlock/inversion valve which did not disengage correctly, allowing the winch to operate while the truck was in gear.

Key issues

- The winch truck driver had placed the truck into low range, which should have ensured the winch could not operate while the truck was in gear.
- The driver had also set the PTO switch to a disengaged position, which should have stopped the winch from operating.
- A mechanical inspection revealed that the aforementioned controls had failed due to a mechanical failure of an interlock/inversion valve which did not disengage correctly allowing the winch to operate while the truck was in gear, unbeknownst to the driver.
- There had been no set preventative maintenance on the failed interlock valve.
- SPO's were found to have been followed.

Recommendations

Operators should consider the merits of

- Reviewing their risks and controls for winch trucks which have similar winch systems.
 - Classifying the interlock valve as a consumable and set a preventative maintenance schedule (ie replace every 6 months).
- Implementing a rope/sling register and winch register per rig management system.

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