

NZ Safety Alert

Let's work together to keep ourselves and our workers safe

5 March 2021

Worker sprayed with battery acid

A contractor's excavator had a dead battery and was plugged into a RAPID 480 charger/starter. After being on charge, the operator successfully started the excavator.

The crew switched the excavator off when they took a break and upon return the excavator would not start. They plugged into the charger again and after an hour on charge, the operator turned the main isolator to the "on" position and the battery exploded.

Battery acid sprayed onto the right side of his body and face. The operator had full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and experienced no serious injuries.



MinEx data on incidents with the potential to cause harm over the 39 months to Sept 2020 show 6% of all incidents (189 incidents) result from pressure release, of which 2% (57 incidents) involve hydraulic pressure.

You need to ensure that:

1. Workers are aware of safe operating procedures for charging batteries, and jump-starting batteries on equipment.
2. Batteries are regularly checked to ensure terminals and clamps are not oxidized, battery caps can vent to prevent build-up of gases, and there is enough electrolyte to cover terminals to prevent sparks.
3. Suitable and appropriate PPE is used when operating plant and equipment.

Know of an incident or near miss? Please share the learnings with us.