

WHAT HAPPENED?

While using an air impact to tighten a rod-type dual back onto a tractor, the socket on an air impact broke. This occurred as the worker was raising his left hand towards the air impact to secure it. The weight of the air impact was then solely in his right hand, rather than on the nut that he was tightening. The instant change in weight caught the worker off guard and the air impact started to fall, freely spinning the broken piece of socket that was still on the hammer end of the air impact. The broken piece of socket landed on the workers left arm cutting him, which resulted in a very deep laceration. As a result, 3 fingers had severed tendons, arteries and veins with over 50% of the muscle damaged. Needless to say, surgery was required. The worker has since regained full mobility of his hand and wrist, but the strength will never be the same.

WHAT DID/COULD HAVE WENT WRONG?

A few things that did go wrong.

- **Firstly**, the socket breaking. The policy has been changed so that workers will cut the rods shorter so only proper impact sockets will work.
- **Secondly**, the worker reached to secure the socket instead of the impact, this angle allowed the hammer to roll over his arm.
- **Thirdly**, it was very hot outside that day and the worker had the sleeves of his coveralls rolled up above his elbow, which provided no protection besides the gloves that he had on.

What could have went wrong?

- The worker could have been on a service call in a field with his mobile unit and not had the time to get to the hospital.
- The worker could have been doing this job on his own and had no help. Thankfully he did and the staff did a great job of keeping the injured worker calm.
- A slightly different angle could have resulted in significantly more damage to the workers arm and the possible loss of use of his my arm.

KEY LESSON FROM INCIDENT

1. Only ever use proper air impact approved sockets.
2. Temperature is no excuse for improper use of PPE.
3. Never support a working impact by holding the socket.
4. Have an emergency plan in place in case of accidents in the workplace.
5. Emergency plans need to have designated people for each task to help minimize confusion during hysteria.
6. Have a return to work policy to best suit your employees/co-workers.

