

Safety Alert

Date: March 2026

Supporting video: resources.nsw.gov.au/sa26-03-video

Grader and front-end loader collide during restricted visibility

This safety alert provides safety advice for the NSW mining industry.

Issue

Failure to identify, assess and control risks associated with operating mobile plant where visibility was restricted by a work environment hazard (sun glare).

Circumstances

A front-end loader was travelling into a quarry at 6:20am on a divided haul road that was inclined towards a pit. The haul road was aligned in an east-west direction and the operator raised the bucket of the loader to protect their vision from sun glare. A grader operator was driving on the haul road in the opposite direction, returning to the workshop after refuelling.

As the loader passed the end of the divided section of the haul road, the operator turned across the haul road to the run of mine (ROM) stockpile and crusher hopper, without lowering the bucket. The loader operator said a two-way communication call was made, but the grader operator did not hear the call and the call could not be confirmed by others.

As the loader turned in front of the grader, the operator took evasive action by turning to the left. Given the unexpected action of the loader and the short time frame, a collision could not be avoided. The loader initially made contact with the grader mid-way along the main structure, before hitting the rear right cabin pillar. All grader cabin supports were severed and the cabin toppled to the left, resting on the front rear tyre.

The grader operator exited the cabin and was transported to hospital for a routine assessment. The operator suffered a minor laceration on the right leg, along with deep bruising.

Neither operator was wearing a seat belt at the time of the incident and the grader was being driven with the left side access door open.

Safety Alert SA26-03

Figure 1: The damaged grader



Figure 2 – Incident re-enactment photo showing obstructed view of the loader operator



Investigation

- A re-enactment of the incident was carried out.
- The loader was found to have an operational two-way radio and a clean windscreen. (The grader was not tested due to cabin damage.)
- The loader operator turned across the haul road while visibility was restricted (see figure 2).
- The mine operator documented systems detailing the requirement to drive heavy mobile equipment with buckets in a lowered position.
- There was an inconsistent reinforcement of safe operating procedures relating to loaders driving with buckets in a raised position. (Workers and managers had normalised the practice of driving with a raised bucket to block sun glare.)
- The mine operator had not identified, assessed and implemented controls in relation to sun glare hazards and workers were able to make their own determination on what controls to use.
- The quarry had no 'call-up' or 'hold point' signs to instruct drivers on the required UHF call and where it should be performed. (Relying on drivers' memory.)
- A review of control measures (investigation) was completed by the mine operator.

Regulator action

A notice was issued to prohibit driving heavy mobile equipment with buckets in a raised position where it obstructed a driver's visibility.

A notice was issued requiring the mine operator, in consultation with workers, to identify, assess and control risks associated with reduced visibility from sun glare, while driving vehicles on site.

Recommendations

- Mine operators need to review the Resources Regulator technical reference guide (TRG) Surface ROVOA as part of their consideration of this incident, in particular:
 - Layer 2 – Vehicle separation controls designed to separate vehicles from potential interaction hazards
 - Layer 6 – Measures in-place to ensure equipment is being used within design parameters
- Mine operators must identify all reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to risks to health and safety from the hazards associated with reduced visibility from the sun (and other work environment hazards) when driving vehicles on site.
- Mine operators must eliminate these risks and if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks to health and safety – minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable, in accordance with section 36 Work Health and Safety Regulation 2025 – hierarchy of controls.
- Mine operators must have systems implemented to ensure that controls detailed in their safety management systems (SMS) and supporting documents are followed.

Safety Alert SA26-03

- Mine operators must install and maintain signs that instruct drivers using the site traffic routes of what calls are required and at what location they must be made.
- Sites are to investigate and, where reasonably practicable, implement roadways that separate vehicles.

Note: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this safety alert and are informed of its content and recommendations. This safety alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine’s information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine’s common area, such as your notice board where appropriate.

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