Improper use of equipment attachments can lead to deaths

Certain heavy-equipment attachments known as quick couplers have led to serious injuries in recent months.

Many jobsites are using these quick couplers instead of traditional pins to connect various attachments (e.g., buckets, ripping teeth, and hammers) to heavy equipment. The problem is that quick couplers may release unexpectedly if they are not properly engaged and locked. If the quick couplers release, whatever was connected to the equipment will become detached and fall. That is exactly what caused the recent injuries on some Ontario construction sites and brought this issue to the attention of the Heavy Civil Construction Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee.

Do a ground test.

The Heavy Civil Construction committee issued an advisory to warn the industry about what can happen if quick couplers are not used and maintained properly. The advisory instructs all heavy-equipment operators to ensure that the quick coupler is locked and secured before use. The best way to do this is to do a ground test (i.e., a bump test).

To perform a ground test,
1. Place the connected attachment on the ground.
2. Using the equipment, apply pressure to the attachment. If the attachment is not securely connected, it should become obvious when you apply pressure.

The advisory also reminds employers to ensure that heavy-equipment operators do the following:

- Comply with the operation manual for the equipment they are using, including quick couplers.
- Be familiar with their assigned equipment and follow the manufacturer's instructions as outlined in the operation manual.
- Maintain equipment as specified in the maintenance manual and remove equipment from service if it has defects that may pose a hazard to workers.

If you use quick couplers, be cautious. Take a few extra minutes to make sure they are fully engaged and locked. If you don't, you risk injuring someone.

To read and download the complete advisory, visit **ihsa.ca**. Give a copy to everyone on your site. It could save someone's life.

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