

MTC – Finger Injury Whilst Hitching a Trailer

8 October 2019

Brief description of Event:

At approximately 13h30 on Road 11 outside the Main Workshop, a Service Provider employee was attempting to hitch a laden trailer onto the tow-bar of a Quantum minibus. As he lifted the trailer hitch towards the tow-bar and proceeded to hook the safety chain around the ball, the trailer moved forward. This resulted in his finger being caught between the hitch of the trailer and the rear bumper of the Quantum.

Outcome:

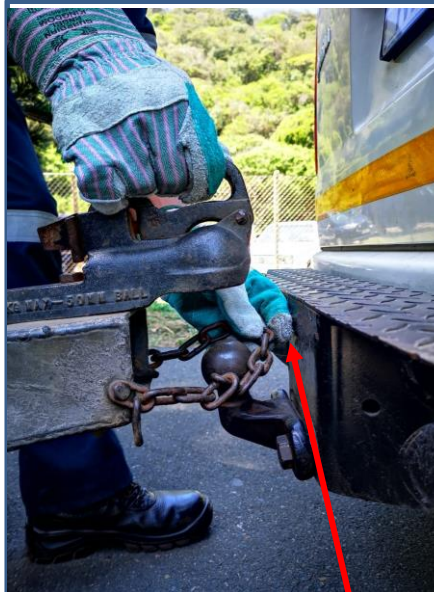
He received first aid at the Sapref clinic and was sent to St Augustine's Hospital for further assessment. The x-rays revealed a fracture to the tip of his ring finger. He received stitches to the cut on his finger and was discharged to resume normal duties. He is expected to make a full recovery. The incident has been classified as a Medical treatment case (MTC).

Summary of main observations:

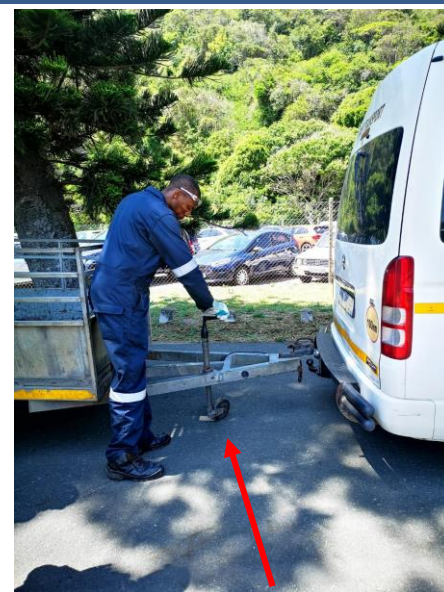
1. The trailer jockey wheel (which allows for controlled aligning of the trailer with the tow-vehicle) had been lost several years ago. The employees had learned to hitch the trailer by lifting and positioning the hitch by hand.
2. The distance between the ball of the tow-bar and the bumper plate was very small. Any small movement of the trailer would cause a person's hand to be caught between the bumper plate and hitch.
3. The employee had performed this activity with chemical resistant gloves instead of heavy-duty leather gloves that would have been more suited to the task. The correct gloves were available in the Quantum and had it been used, the injury may have been mitigated.

Immediate actions taken:

1. The trailer was removed from use until the jockey wheel had been replaced.
2. A stand down was conducted with the team and they were instructed on the correct method of hitching a trailer (via a Jockey Wheel).
3. The minibus was prohibited from further towing until the tow-bar was moved further away from the bumper to allow for sufficient safety-clearance.



Finger placed
between tow-bar
ball and bumper



Jockey Wheel that
should have been
in place and used
to lower trailer
onto tow-bar

Corrective & Preventative actions taken:

1. A site inspection (Refinery & Island View) revealed that there are several trailers that are not equipped with Jockey Wheels. These are to be replaced before use.
2. Jockey Wheels are often lost when they are left in the extended position whilst driving. Upon impact with the ground they become dislodged and lost.
3. The tow vehicle must be reversed (with flagman) as close as possible to the trailer before lowering the hitch onto the tow-bar with the jockey wheel.