

98-05: Glad Hand Safety



Pacific Maritime Association
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SAFETY BULLETIN 98-5

March 30, 1998

SEMI-TRACTOR "GLAD HAND" SAFETY

INFORMATION

There have been a number of accidents involving the chassis brake airline connection between the Semi-Tractor and the chassis. When the Semi-Tractor is separated from the chassis, and the driver pulls away without separating the Glad Hands, the airlines are stretched and break apart, (sometimes at the glad hands) and recoil. When this happens, the connector is propelled at high speed and with great energy toward and perhaps through the rear door. This may result in serious injuries to the driver. **These accidents are preventable. Standard procedure calls for the driver to disconnect the airlines before separating the Semi-Tractor from the chassis.**

As a result of these incidents, a subcommittee of the Southern California JAPC was formed to study this issue. In addition, several companies are working on their own solutions.

One Company, Marine Terminals Corporation, has installed a second set of "glad hands" in the vertical position mounted on the rear of the Semi-Tractor cab. By installing the second set of glad hands in this manner, any taut pull on the airlines, causes the glad hands to twist, disengage and snap back toward the chassis. MTC has retrofitted their existing Semi-Tractors, and all their new SISU tractors will be delivered from the manufacturer with the modification already installed.

Other companies including Stevedoring Services of America, have installed a breakaway connector in the airline between the fixed piping on the Semi-Tractor and the flex airline to the chassis. If the airline

becomes taut, the breakaway piece shears off, and like the other solution, the airline snaps back toward the chassis.

ACTION

As previously noted, these accidents are preventable. Employers should require superintendents and foremen to frequently observe operations, and remind Semi-Tractor drivers at gangway safety meetings to disconnect the brake lines as a routine part of the chassis disconnect procedure. Drivers should be reminded of the energy and recoil danger of the airlines if they are not disconnected. Drivers should also be cautioned to keep the rear door on the Semi-Tractor closed while the vehicle is in operation.

Mechanical disconnects or airline weak links, **a safety back up to the standard procedural requirement**, are under various stages of development and deployment. When the Southern California JAPC subcommittee makes it's report, the information will be shared. In the meantime, Steve Allen at MTC in San Pedro may be contacted at (310) 519-2307 regarding their modifications. Mr Rob Dieda at SSA may be contacted at (206) 623-0304 regarding their proposal.