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Safety Bulletin on Closure Safety Systems

Purpose

Visitors at our booth at the SSPC 2011 conference in Tampa brought to light a concerning situation in our industry. Several people inquired about safety, especially relating to the 10" closures on the top of Bulk Blasting equipment. We were asked many times about the difference in Schmidt's HALOK Safety System compared to other manufacturers' "Lock out-Tag out" (LOTO). The patented HALOK is a mechanism that ensures the operator follows the proper Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), whereas a LOTO simply adds another step to the existing SOPs.

Background

The original 10" closure on all Schmidt Bulk Blasting equipment built before February 2010 was the safest closure known to us, as long as the proper Standard Operating Procedure was followed. The SOP for the closure states that once the vessel is verified to be depressurized, the operator is to first disengage the cam action handles one at a time. During this process the swing bolts must remain fully engaged in the receiving lugs until all five of the handles are disengaged. The disengagement of the cam action handles allows some vertical movement of the swing bolts, essentially loosening them.

The purpose of this is that as long as all five of the swing bolts remain in the receiving lugs, should the vessel still have pressure, the lid will be lifted up until it comes in contact with the nuts on the swing bolts, this lifting action breaks the O-ring seal allowing air to escape, indicating to the operator that the vessel is pressurized and that they are in a dangerous situation. In this condition the operator will experience extraordinary resistance in trying to swing the bolts down due to the receiving lugs being mounted at a slightly upward angle.

Should the SOP not be followed and the swing bolts not be retained in the receiving lugs until all five cam lock handles are disengaged, the vessel pressure is capable of, and in fact has, blown the lid off with incredible force causing severe bodily injury and even death. Additionally, some Bulk Blasting units do not have properly operating cam action handles on their closures. A result of this has been operators' using hammers or other objects to forcibly swing the bolts down. This action was the cause of a very tragic accident that required us to testify during the subsequent trial.

HALOK® Safety System

The HALOK Safety System, standard on all Schmidt Bulk blasting equipment built after February 2010, is much more than a Lock out-Tag out. The system is designed to mechanically force the operator to follow the proper SOP for opening the closure.

The LOTO mechanisms simply put one further step in the SOP, which requires "authorized" personnel to witness the unit prior to the closure being opened. There is not a single incident,

which we are aware of, where an operator was injured or killed who was not considered an "authorized" person.

- The HALOK ensures that the swing bolts remain in the receiving lugs until all five of the cam action handles are disengaged. The LOTO does nothing to maintain the swing bolts position in the receiving lugs once it is unlocked.
- The HALOK covers the top of the swing bolts in the closed position, preventing the operator from hitting them, effectively acting as a guard while the cam handles are up or engaged. The LOTO does not prevent the operator from forcing the swing bolts out of the receiving lugs once it is unlocked.
- The HALOK mandates that while closing the closure, all five of the swing bolts be set into the receiving lugs before any cam action handles are engaged. The LOTO does not address the inherent danger once it is removed. Once removed, you have a closure identical to those involved in several injuries and deaths.
- A pneumatic locking system on a LOTO adds an opportunity for mechanical failure without ensuring the closure is opened in a safe manner.

RECOMMENDATION

Click on either link to see a YouTube explanation of the HALOK System:

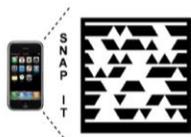


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AS3ND-Dnov4>



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