



Yukon Workers' Compensation  
Health and Safety Board

Commission de la  
santé et de la  
sécurité au  
travail du Yukon

## **Preliminary Findings into the September 11, 2009 Workplace Fatality on Dominion Creek near Dawson City**

**PURPOSE:**

These initial findings are being released to provide information into the direct causes of this fatality. It is hoped that providing this information will encourage others to review these causes and examine their own workplaces to ensure similar conditions either do not exist or, if they do, are immediately corrected.

**INTRODUCTION:**

On September 11, 2009 a 65 year old owner-operator of a placer mine on Dominion Creek near Dawson City, was using a Michigan 175B Loader to feed gravel into his sluice box. The loader was an older model that was not equipped with a Roll Over Protection System (ROPS) and had faulty brakes.

The owner operator had built a ramp with a 16% grade to give enough height for him to dump material onto the "grizzly" that separated the large boulders from the gravel which then fed into the sluice box. He had driven up the ramp and raised the loader bucket to dump a load of material onto the grizzly when the loader engine stalled. The resulting sudden loss of power caused the loader to roll backwards down the ramp.

While attempting to steer the loader down the slope without power it struck a gravel bank at the bottom of the slope. The left side tires ran up onto the gravel bank, causing the loader to roll over onto its cab. The cab was crushed along with the operator.

**DIRECT CAUSES:**

Preliminary findings indicate that the direct causes of this fatality includes a loss of power when the engine on the loader failed and the loader was not equipped with serviceable brakes, resulting in a runaway backwards down a slope. The lack of power likely inhibited the operator's ability to steer, resulting in the loader striking the gravel bank and overturning.

Finally, the cab of the loader was not equipped with a ROPS and did not have the structural integrity to hold the weight of the loader and protect the operator inside.

**PREVENTION:**

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board reminds all workplace parties to ensure the equipment they are operating is in sound mechanical condition. Prior to operating equipment, operators should test critical systems and, if defects are observed, immediately remove the equipment from service and report to a supervisor or person responsible.

If braking systems are not working, equipment must be removed from service until they are repaired.

Equipment that is not fitted with a ROPS must immediately be removed from service. ROPS canopies can be designed and fitted to older equipment by a professional engineer registered in Yukon, or sometimes obtained through the original equipment manufacturer. Employers and operators are also reminded that seat belts are required when operating equipment.