



# SAFETY ALERT

DATE: 5<sup>th</sup> Aug 2024

SA: 0007

TITLE:

Vacuum tanker injury

INDUSTRY SECTOR:

Water utilities

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Waste networks, wastewater treatment and operational jetting contractors

ORIGINAL SAFETY ALERT ISSUED BY

Ausjet

## ABOUT THE INCIDENT

An operator was shutting down his unit when he noticed a hissing noise. He investigated the source of the noise, going to the rear of the debris tank. Standing directly behind the dewatering end cap, he released the end cap's camlock. Once released, stored air pressure in the debris tank escaped, throwing the operator backwards off his feet, and he struck the ground.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Occupation of Person	Operator
Experience of Person	3 months
HPWJ/Vac Training Level	Nil - NDD operator
Other Training	Manufacturer's face-to-face induction to unit
No. of Hours Completed (On shift that day)	7 hours
Time of incident	1.45am
Result of Injury/Damage	Injuries to operators hand and ribs
Lost Days	NA
What Equipment Category	Vacuum loader
Equipment Used	Vacuum combination unit



## IMMEDIATE ACTION

- Medical attention for the injured operator
- Investigation commenced
- Notification to the regulator

## PREVENTATIVE ACTION

### Engineering

- Ensure the pressure gauge is incremented to show low pressure readings inside the vessel. The pressure gauge that was fitted did not have a noticeable scale for the low pressure reading.
- Installation of a visual alert system.

### Administration

- Educate operators on potential line-of-fire hazard
- Training should include checking pressure readings inside the debris tank before attempting to open any ports.



## LEARNINGS

**Any pressurised tank creates a significant risk of forceful release of gases. Most vacuum interceptors are not pressurised. However due to the new design of internal cleaning systems, the possibility of pressurising the interceptor has increased.**

- When using air pressure systems, ensure the tank is open (i.e. dewatering valve or debris door open) and that all pressuring systems (i.e. cyclone cleaners, dewatering) are off before the door or valve is closed
- Always check the pressure gauge for pressure - any positive pressure can be a hazard
- If the tank is pressurised, follow the manufacturer's procedure to release the pressure under control. Any positive pressure can be hazardous - ensure it is at zero.
- If you are unsure of the process, stop operations, call your supervisor, and do not proceed until the hazard is rectified.
- Never stand in the path of something that can hurt you. Stay out of the line-of-fire.