



# CompWest Loss Lessons: Belt Conveyor

## True Story

An employee was using a saw to cut materials. Occasionally, this produces scrap pieces that can fly onto an adjacent conveyor belt. In this particular environment, there was no barrier safeguarding the opening where the conveyor belt wraps around the pulley. The worker suffered a severe injury when trying to remove debris from the belt and pulley and needed immediate medical attention.

After reviewing the incident, two lessons became apparent – only trained employees should be operating a conveyor system and emergency stop buttons should be accessible.

## Lessons Learned

The following are some of the findings from the incident investigation:

- Emergency stop buttons were not located within easy reach of workers in case of emergency.
- A cable-style emergency stop along the entire length of the conveyor did not exist.
- Workers were not sufficiently trained on energy control procedures.
- A barrier did not guard the opening where the belt wraps around the pulley.
- The remote location of this task led to reduced response and reaction time from other co-workers.

## Additional Resources

- [CompWest Lockout/Tagout Program and Resource Library](#)
- [OSHA Lockout-Tagout eTool](#)
- [NYCOSH Safety Factsheet: Hazards of Conveyors](#)

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. For further information, please contact your CompWest loss control consultant.

## Prevention Tips

Consider the following points to mitigate risks around a conveyor belt:

- Allow only skilled and trained workers to operate or maintain conveyors.
- Regularly train all authorized and affected employees on proper energy control (lockout-tagout) practices.
- Conduct an assessment of emergency stop button locations for easy accessibility.
- Consider the use of a cable-style emergency stop option – in case of an emergency, an operator can push or pull to stop the conveyor from running.
- Install permanent barrier guards to shield workers from nip points, shear points and other moving parts.
- Wear close-fitting clothing and ensure head and facial hair is cut or confined.
- Avoid wearing jewelry, lanyards or other hanging items.
- Use awareness devices such as warning signs or lights.
- Implement a buddy system for new hires.

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