

Worker Struck by Pipe During Pressure Test

Incident Date: August 3, 2017 / Location: Veteran, AB / Industry: Oilfield Services



AI Teaching Illustration. Highlights the test bar's line of fire. Equipment, posture and exposure zone are schematic; no injury is depicted.

What Happened

After a shift-change meeting, two coil-tube operators worked on a second pressure test of the blowout preventer (BOP). The first test had been completed by the night crew. The workers bled the lines, and one gave verbal and hand-signal confirmation that this was done.

The supervisor opened the slip rams, which held the tubing. A worker positioned over the wellhead was struck in the face by the test pipe. The supervisor heard a call for 911 and returned to find the worker unresponsive. Co-workers and the site medic responded; emergency services attended and the worker was pronounced deceased.

Why This Became Fatal

The worker was exposed to the test pipe's movement path. Bleed-off confirmation was followed by opening the retaining slips while the worker was over the wellhead. The employer later admitted failing to provide adequate, detailed written BOP pressure-testing procedures. Pressure and restraint changes require verified controls and clear exclusion zones.

NEVER FORGET.

LET THEIR STORY PREVENT RECURRENCE.

What Safe Looks Like

Verify pressure control and keep people clear before releasing restraints.



1 Use a Detailed Procedure

Define testing, isolation, bleed-off and restraint-release steps.

2 Verify the Energy State

Confirm trapped pressure is released by the approved method.

3 Keep People Out of the Path

Maintain the exclusion zone until safe access is verified. Never lean over a test bar or pressure opening.

AI Teaching Illustration. A hold point; barriers control access, not projectile impact. **LSR links:** Energy Isolation; Line of Fire.

Investigation Outcome

On **March 12, 2020, Element Technical Services pleaded guilty** to failing to protect its worker by providing adequate written BOP pressure-testing procedures. The sentence was a **\$5,000 fine including surcharge, plus \$310,000** to Energy Safety Canada for pressure-hazard awareness. The report records no supervisor conviction. The investigation closed March 13, 2020.

Talk It Through with Your Crew

- 1 Where could pressure move a bar, plug, hose or fitting toward a worker?
- 2 How do we verify trapped pressure is gone before releasing a restraint?
- 3 Does our written procedure cover the complete test and safe-access sequence?
- 4 Would you stop or refuse the task if pressure status or the procedure was uncertain?

SAFETY COMES FIRST.

Your Right to Refuse – Alberta. You may refuse work you reasonably believe presents an undue hazard: a serious and immediate threat. Promptly report the refusal and reasons to your employer or supervisor. They must investigate. Contact Alberta OHS if unresolved. Take reasonable care not to endanger others. You are protected from reprisal.

Sources: [Alberta OHS investigation Report No-F-OHS-127234-E11B0](#), pp. 2-6; summary completed March 13, 2020. [Alberta refusal guidance](#). Prepared October 19, 2026. LSR links are learning associations, not findings of a breach.

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