

Worker Struck by Metal Bar at Planer

Incident Date: March 31, 2022 / Location: La Crete, AB / Industry: Sawmills and Planing Mills



AI Teaching Illustration. Conceptual jam-clearing scene before injury, based on OHS's likely mechanism. The incident was unwitnessed.

What Happened

An experienced planer feeder operator was trying to clear lumber debris from a planer at La Crete Sawmills. The machine was still energized. OHS concluded that the metal bar used to strike the debris caught in the feed roller and kicked back into the operator.

There were no witnesses. The supervisor found the operator about one minute later, at approximately 4:09 p.m. The feed roller was still running. First aid was provided, and EMS and RCMP attended. The worker was pronounced dead shortly afterward.

Why This Became Fatal

The running feed roller turned a hand tool into a striking hazard. The jam was being cleared while the planer remained energized. Standing outside the machine did not keep the operator safe: the bar connected the worker to the roller's movement and kickback path.

NEVER FORGET.

LET THEIR STORY PREVENT RECURRENCE.

What Safe Looks Like

A jam is a reason to stop and isolate before reaching in with any tool.



1 Stop and Lock Out

Isolate all hazardous energy using the machine-specific procedure.

2 Verify It Is Safe

Control residual energy and verify isolation before clearing the jam.

3 Clear and Restart Safely

Use the approved method; restore guards and account for people before restart.

AI Teaching Illustration. Hold point before jam clearing; isolation must be machine-specific. **LSR links:** Energy Isolation; Line of Fire.

Investigation Outcome

La Crete Sawmills Ltd. faced four charges and **pleaded guilty on November 7, 2023** to failing to ensure the worker's safety. A **\$295,000 creative sentence** funded workplace-safety education through Fort Vermilion School Division. The mill introduced a 14-day training and competency process and lockout requirements for jam clearing. No supervisor conviction is reported.

Talk It Through with Your Crew

- 1 Where do we use a bar, stick or other tool to clear a jam while equipment runs?
- 2 Could that tool be caught, pulled in or thrown back toward someone?
- 3 What must be isolated and verified before we clear this machine?
- 4 Would you stop or refuse work if a jam could not be cleared safely?

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 OHS-272435](#), pp. 2-5; summary completed March 12, 2024. [Alberta refusal guidance](#). Prepared October 20, 2026. LSR links are learning associations, not findings of a breach.