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**Safety  
Alert**

Health, Environment  
& Safety

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## "TAGGING A WELL"

**In a recent Significant Incident, a contract employee's fingers were caught between the top clamp and the load cell requiring a skin graft to his fingers.**

### **Summary of Incident:**

A Roustabout crew was in the process of lowering the rod string on the well in order to "tag the well". The injured contractor was tightening the rod clamp above the load cell, when the rod string slipped due to the top lubricator box collapsing. When the rod string slipped, the injured contractor's fingers on his left hand were caught between the top clamp and the load cell. X-rays indicated no broken bones; However, the contractor's fingers will require a skin graft. The Roustabout crew had placed two lubricator boxes between the packing gland and the bottom clamp in order to re-space the rods on the well. Lubricator boxes are not the proper equipment to be used when raising or lowering rods on a beam-pumping unit.



Lubricator Box that failed causing the rod string to fall.



Wamco Suitcase –manufactured rod stand.

### **What Were the Primary Causes:**

- One of the two lubricator boxes failed causing the rod string to fall. Lubricator boxes are designed for polish rod lubrication, as lube oil reservoirs only, and are not designed to withstand a load.
- The contract employee had positioned his left hand between the top rod clamp and the load cell.

### **Corrective Actions:**

- Lubricator boxes and other similar pieces of equipment that do not have a documented load rating shall never be used for supporting the weight of a rod string. The proper equipment to be used is a manufactured rod stand, such as the Wamco Polished Rod Suitcase or a rod stand that is designed in accordance with generally accepted industry practices, has a documented load rating and a load test certification.
- Even though pinch points is a line item on pre-job tailgate safety meetings forms, all JSAs should address the placement of an employee's hands.

### **Key Learnings:**

- Prior to any job, all contractors and employees shall include in their Tail Gate Safety Meeting a review of the JSA that pertain to the task.
- Working at heights was not a causal connection for this incident; However, when it is required to be at a height at or above 4 feet when lowering or raising the rod string on a beam-pumping unit, compliance with OSHA Standard for General Industry 29 CFR 1910.23(c)(1) is required. This regulation specifies that "every open-sided floor or platform four feet or more above adjacent floor or ground level shall be guarded by a standard railing . . . on all open sides except where there is entrance to a ramp, stairway, or fixed ladder . . ."