



# SAFETY ALERT

## Using Hammers to Install and Remove Rail Fastening Clips

A multitude of injuries, some time lost and some requiring surgery, have occurred across the rail industry where hammers have been used to install and sometimes remove rail fasteners (clips). This is an especially high risk activity when applying fasteners to steel sleepers where serious injuries have occurred and will continue to occur if the practice continues. Identified hazards include:

- Person using hammer or a bystander struck by flying ballast.
- Struck by flying clip.
- Struck by a metal fragment broken off the track fastener during a “miss hit”.

Some recorded injuries include:

- Fractured jaw.
- Unconsciousness.
- Broken teeth.
- Fractured finger
- Head and facial lacerations requiring sutures.

From an infrastructure perspective the use of hammers damages clips, posts or sleeper fastenings reducing the tension they apply to the rail foot and reducing the integrity of the fastening system.

The required Safety Controls to be adopted when removing or installing rail fasteners are clearly detailed in the current Safe Work Method Statements for Rail Welding and Rail Adjustment. You should have read and signed off on the Safe Work Method Statements applicable to the tasks you are undertaking. There is a clear requirement in these documents to:

- Use the correct tool specified by the fastener manufacturer to remove and install clips. Do not use hammers to remove or install clips. Wear approved eye protection when removing dogs with a hammer and pigs foot or anchors with a hammer. Look around to ensure others are not in the potential trajectory path of flying ballast or track fasteners.

Persons identified to have incorrectly or unsafely used tools to remove or install rail fasteners may be suspended pending an investigation and disciplinary action may be taken against offenders who place others at risk of injury through their negligence.

John Lewis  
Safety and Risk Manager  
Mobile 0408 522 554