

Seatbelt interlock on excavators

CAMs # 498689

SUMMARY

- Seatbelt interlock switches must be fitted to all FH-owned zero swing excavators by 30 June 2026.
- Interlock switches may be required for some FH standard swing excavators by 30 December 2026.
- We request subbies and hire companies to adopt this safety improvement early, before the deadline of 30th June 2028

Action on: Regional Managers, Project Directors, workshop teams, National Procurement

1. Relevant To

This alert is important for all managers and operators of excavators owned by Fulton Hogan, our workshops, hire companies and subcontractors.

2. Background

A very serious incident occurred late last year in Tauranga during a standard pipe unloading job.

The operator of a zero tail swing excavator was preparing to unload pipes from a truck. The digger boom was set on the ground with the engine running. The operator disengaged the controls and used the “deadman” lockout lever to raise the console. They began to climb out of the cab, to help direct the fitting of lifting slings.

While climbing down, **the operator’s radio cord hooked around the left control joystick**. This pulled the console down slightly. The hydraulic system engaged, the boom lifted, and the cab started to slew. The operator was dragged across the excavator’s tracks.

Bravely, two workers ran and saved the operator from very serious injuries by lifting him up and taking pressure off the controls.

An interim safety alert was issued to the business at the time.



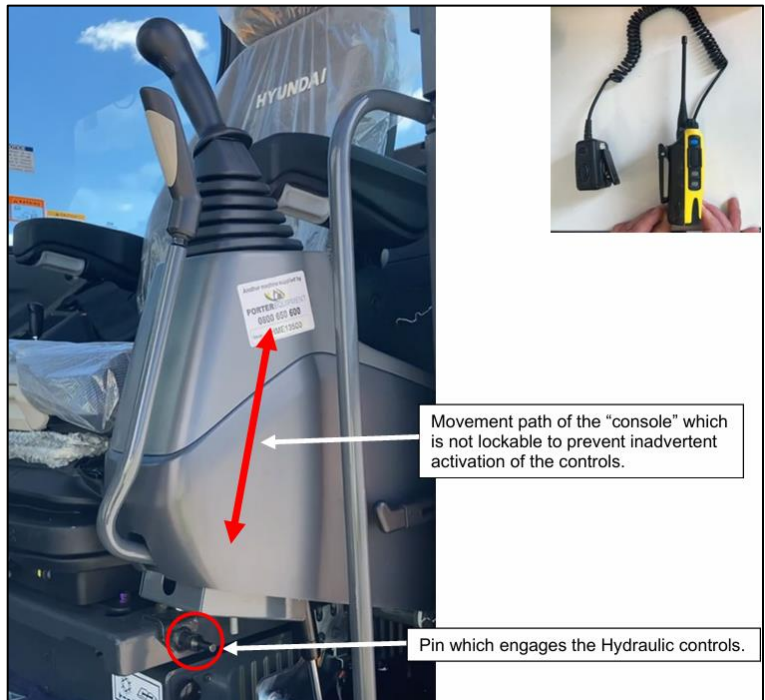
3. Findings

The BOP H&S team, with the support of Andy Allen and Graham Eaton, thoroughly investigated the incident and found that:

“While lifting the excavator’s left joystick console disabled the hydraulics, even the slightest downward movement on the console could reactivate the controls”

In other words, the manufacturer’s deadman control only locks the machine out when it is in the fully upright position.

Further investigation found that [this hazard is present in most zero tail swing excavators](#). It also affects many non-zero-swing machines. Fulton Hogan owns around 120 zero swing excavators and around 180 non zero swing.



Similar incidents have occurred in the past when clothing or cables have caught on levers and controls.

4. Response

We will introduce an additional engineering control to eliminate this risk: [a seatbelt interlock, which isolates the hydraulic system whenever the seatbelt is disconnected](#). This additional control will support, not replace, the existing lockout system.

The seatbelt, switch and wiring can be fitted by Fulton Hogan workshops. Kits are available from Porter Hire – order directly from your local branch.

Cost is \$1500 per machine, to be funded through existing R&M budgets.

Implementation: Phase 1 – FH-owned zero tail swing excavators

Fit seatbelt-activated lock out switches to all FH-owned zero tail swing excavators before 30 June 2026.

Implementation: Phase 2 – All other FH-owned excavators

Fulton Hogan owns around 180 non zero swing machines. Some of these may present the same risk. The effectiveness of the manufacturer’s “deadman” controls must be checked at their next six monthly certified safe inspection.

Where these machines carry the same risk as zero swing machines, seatbelt interlocks must be fitted before 30 December 2026.

Implementation: Phase 3 – Subbie and hired-in excavators

We encourage hire companies and subcontractors to adopt this improvement as soon as possible. This will be a requirement from 30 June 2028.

5. Mandatory Requirements

Please complete the following mandatory requirements:

	Action	Responsible	Do before
5.1	Discuss this RED Alert with workshop teams, and managers and operators of excavators owned by Fulton Hogan	Regional Managers, Project Directors	28-Feb-26
5.2	Fit a switch that isolates the hydraulic system automatically whenever the seatbelt is disconnected, to all zero swing excavators.	Regional Managers, Project Directors	30-Jun-26
5.3	Test all other FH-owned excavators for this risk as part of our 2026 Certified Safe inspections. Where this risk is present, fit a switch that isolates the hydraulic system automatically whenever the seatbelt is disconnected.	Regional Managers, Project Directors	30-Dec-26
5.4	Update Certified Safe requirements accordingly.	G Eaton	28-Feb-26
5.5	Establish a safety improvement team to assess the suitability of clothing and PPE used by excavator operators, particularly the likelihood of entanglement. Identify any practical improvements.	A Allen	30-Jun-26
5.6	Discuss this alert with local subcontractors and hire company branches. Advise them that we require them to meet this requirement by 30 June 2028 (preferably sooner).	Regional Managers, Project Directors	28-Feb-26
5.7	Share this alert with national hire company head offices.	R Jones	28-Feb-26

6. Revision History

Date	Author	Brief Description of Change
07/01/2025	A Allen	First draft
15/01/2026	T Talbot, S Shore	Final version
30/01/2026	S Shore	Clarify subbie requirement in summary

7. Closeout Requirements

Please discuss this Red Alert with your teams, complete the items below and return to your Safety Manager. They will collate all responses for the business unit and send a single confirmation to the HSQES Analyst at nzincident@fultonhogan.com before 30th December 2026.

7.1. What date was this Red Alert communicated to the workplace: ____/____/2026

7.2. Could this incident occur in your Region/Project? (Circle your answer below)

YES If Yes, please answer questions 7.3 & 7.4

NO If No, please answer question 7.5

7.3. Have all the actions and recommendations been implemented? (Circle your answer below)

YES If Yes, please answer question 7.4

NO If No, please answer question 7.5

7.4. Are these measures sufficient to eliminate or reduce the risk of an incident (or similar) described in the alert from happening again? (Circle your answer below)

YES or **NO**

If No, please raise a CAM's case listing the required actions and accountabilities to be taken in order to eliminate or reduce the risk. Record the CAM's number below:

CAMs Case Number: CAMs- _____

7.5. Please explain why this incident could not occur within your region / project.

In signing this document, I confirm that the actions above have been completed in this region/project.

Region / Project: _____

Region / Project Manager Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____