

Safety Bulletin

Serious hand injury during compressor refuelling

Classification:
Incident

Issued by:
GenAir UK Ltd, QHSE Dept

Distribution:
All Hire Customers

Incident overview

During refuelling operations, an operative refuelled a compressor while it remained running. After refuelling, the fuel filler cap accidentally fell inside the machine. The operative reached into the body of the compressor to retrieve the cap and, in doing so, made contact with the rotating engine cooling fan, resulting in a hand injury and damage to the compressor. The investigation confirmed that:

- The compressor was not isolated or switched off before refuelling.
- The machine was fitted with a wire mesh fan guard.
- Warning signage stating "Do not refuel machine whilst running, please turn off" was present on the compressor.
- The operative reached into the machine housing while attempting to retrieve the fuel cap.

The customer's site investigation attributed the incident to operator actions and non-compliance with the refuelling procedure.

Why the outcome wasn't worse

The fan fitted to this compressor is manufactured from a composite material, which sheared under excess load rather than remained rigid (potentially a design feature). In this incident, the fan blades sheared on contact (see Fig. 2), which reduced the severity of the injury. Had the fan been a rigid metal design, the outcome could have been more severe.

This is not a design benefit that operators should ever rely on or test. It is a design mitigation, not a substitute for safe working practice. GenAir will also be feeding this incident back to Atlas Copco, our OEM partner, to discuss potential guarding and design improvements for future consideration. In the meantime, our focus is on the actions below – training, signage, and safe working practice – as the most immediate and effective ways to prevent a repeat of this incident.

GenAir safety position

The safety of our customers and their operators remains our highest priority. This incident is a reminder that safe operating procedures must always be followed, regardless of the guarding and signage fitted to equipment. GenAir reinforces the following mandatory safety requirements for all hired compressors:

- Refuelling must never be carried out while the compressor is running.
- Daily checks, inspections or maintenance activities must never be undertaken while the compressor is operating.
- The compressor must always be shut down, isolated, and all rotating parts allowed to come to a complete stop before any access panels or doors are opened.
- When the compressor is running, all gullwing and access doors must remain fully closed and secured.
- Any work on hired equipment beyond standard operation, including maintenance, repair or fault-finding, must only be carried out by trained personnel and, where required under the terms of hire, by GenAir-authorized engineers. Please refer to your hire agreement for full terms.

These requirements are essential to protect operators from contact with moving components and to ensure the equipment operates safely as designed. As standard practice, GenAir is happy to provide toolbox talks and refresher briefings on safe operating procedures to any customer on request, please speak to your account manager.

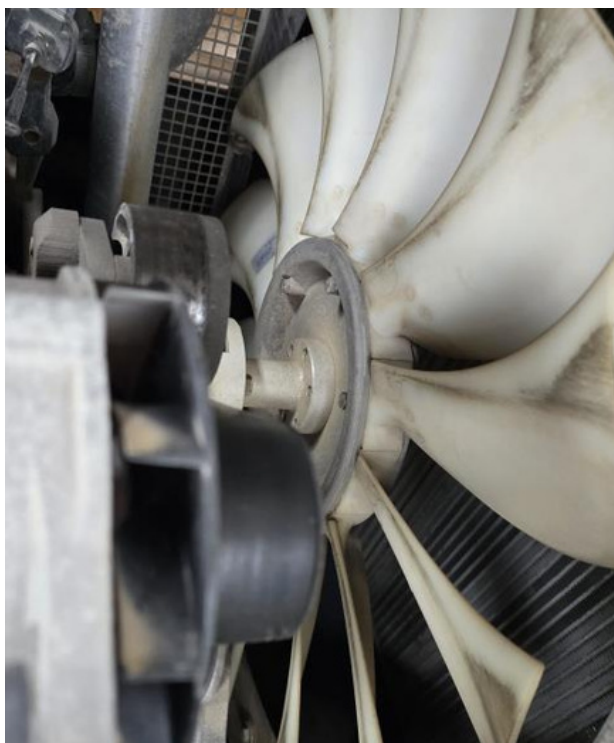


Fig. 1: Fan guard assembly, undamaged

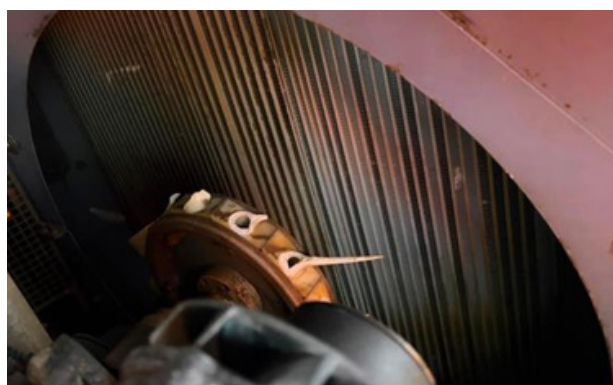


Fig. 2: Fan following contact – composite blades sheared

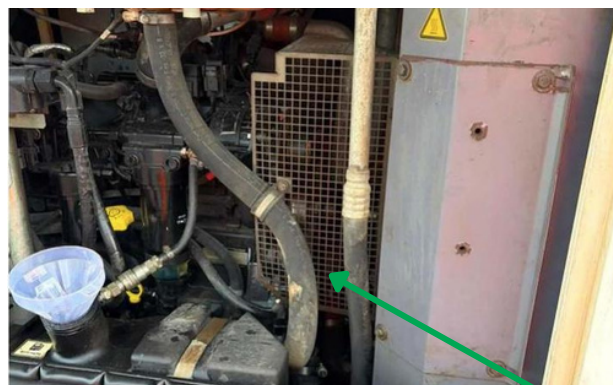


Fig. 3: Gap adjacent to the fan guard through which the hand was believed to have passed (indicated with arrow)

GenAir's response

Following this incident, GenAir is taking the following steps:

- Reviewing and improving signage across our diesel compressor fleet, to make refuelling instructions as clear and visible as possible.
- Running a toolbox talk and safety stand-down briefing for GenAir drivers and engineers, to reinforce the risks of refuelling live equipment and of placing hands inside a compressor while it is running.
- Building this specific risk into our handover and familiarisation training, so it is highlighted directly with customers and operators at the point of delivery, every time.
- Feeding back to Atlas Copco, our OEM partner, on potential guarding and design improvements for future consideration.

Actions required

We're asking all customers to take the following steps with site teams and operators:

- Ensure operators attend and engage with the handover and familiarisation briefing provided at the point of delivery. This is not just a formality, and covers exactly this kind of risk.
- Check that signage on hired compressors is visible, legible, and undamaged. If any signage is missing or hard to read, please let your account manager know and we'll replace it.
- Reinforce in toolbox talks that live equipment must never be refuelled, and that hands should never be placed inside a guard, gap, or enclosure on running machinery, for any reason.
- Make sure operators know how to stop the machine before refuelling, and are confident using the emergency stop if something goes wrong mid-task.
- Report near misses, even where no injury occurs. They are one of the most valuable tools we have for preventing a more serious incident later.
- If you'd like GenAir to run a toolbox talk or refresher briefing on safe refuelling practices for your site team, please get in touch with your account manager.

Investigation outcome

The customer's investigation into this incident has now concluded. It found no fault with the equipment supplied, identifying the cause as a procedural failing by the operator rather than an equipment issue. The customer has kindly supported sharing this incident as a learning opportunity for other users.

Questions or need support?

Contact GenAir UK Ltd — QHSE Department
Tel: 0121 505 2134 | www.genair.co.uk



*GenAir UK Ltd is committed to the safe operation of all hired equipment.
This bulletin is issued in the interest of shared learning across our customer base.*