

Hydro Tasmania

SSL/INJURY/ILLNESS INCIDENT OUTCOME

Water release into spiral case

Document Number	260114_IO	Date Issued	14 January 2026
Incident Owner	Sam Vernham	Approved By	Head of WHS
SAP Number	85009	Type of Incident	Moderate Risk Incident

Incident description

During the Mackintosh Power Station Major Maintenance Outage, work was underway on multiple fronts. The penstock and spiral case had been drained and isolated, with the spiral case access hatch left open following earlier work. A task had to be performed to service the intake still well. This required closing still well supply valves and opening still well drain valves. When the drain valves were opened, water unexpectedly flowed through a header pipe into the penstock and down into the spiral case, where it exited through the open access hatch. The water flow was observed by a passing worker and reported immediately. No personnel were in the spiral case at the time, and no injuries occurred.

Description: Spiral case access with drain valve behind



Incident Contributing Factors:

- Limited task guidance:** No operational procedure / work instruction available for this task and the Work Order (*4-yearly still well service*) contained only basic instructions, not providing adequate guidance for a rarely performed task.
- Information gaps:** Drawings or other information to help identify where water would drain to were not readily accessible.
- Energy control:** Still well drain valves are not normally treated as an isolation point for penstock or spiral case access (statewide practice)
- Planning constraints:** Changing outage scope increased workload and reduced planning time.
- Work-as-imagined vs. work-as-done:** Task execution relied on adaptations due to absent or unclear controls and requirements (existing procedures, drawings or mandatory isolation steps).
- Operator experience:** The operator had not performed this task before, increasing reliance on the available instructions and reasonable adaptations.

Incident Learnings & Actions for leaders, employees and contractors

- Encourage planning conversations** that explore “where could energy unintentionally come from or go to?”, even for familiar or seemingly low-risk tasks. Treat uncertainty or missing information as a signal to pause and seek support; and remember – tasks that look routine may still be new in practice (like new long-term system work orders which are yet to be executed for the first time).
- Use your continuous improvement processes** to highlight work instructions, drawings, or operational procedure improvement opportunities as you find them.
- Corrective Actions:** Clear work instructions are being developed for intake still well servicing as well as an Operational directive on penstock drain procedures resulting from this investigation.