

# PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 76

<b>Date:</b> August 2024	<b>Focus Group:</b> Machine Owners and Operators
<b>Topic:</b> Waterways and Stable Ground	<b>Issued by:</b> Nic Steens

**Background and Incidents:** In July, two fatal incidents occurred involving excavators near water, likely due to unstable ground. Although these incidents were outside PF Olsen’s operations, similar incidents in the industry have involved excavators ending up in dangerous positions or trapping operators.

**Injury Details:** No further injuries have been reported, but the fatal outcomes and the high potential for harm emphasise the importance of high order controls.

**Risk Awareness:** Operating machinery near water or on unstable ground carries high risks, including machine instability and difficulty exiting in emergencies. Conditions like soft ground, water ingress, and unpredictable terrain can lead to serious incidents. Unexpected changes, such as worsening weather, can increase risks.

**Safe Behaviours:** To minimise risk when working near water or on unstable ground:

- Plan carefully, assess ground stability, identify hazards, and use high-order controls.
- Position excavators on stable ground and monitor conditions continuously.
- Ensure emergency exits are accessible and practice with emergency drills.
- Communicate risks and controls to operators, ensuring everyone knows procedures for sudden changes. Remember – just because you can, doesn’t mean you should!
- Avoid working near water during high-risk periods like after heavy rain.
- If crossing water, ensure visibility and stability of the ground below.
- Refer to the WorkSafe NZ guidance “[Working near water is a high-risk activity.](#)”

**For Site Manager:**

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators:
2. Place on-site notice board or in file:

**Site Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** / /  
(initials)

