



SAFETY ALERT

Wheel Loader Rollover — Ecogas Hornby

Date of event	8 Jul 2026
Contact for further information	HSW@pioneerenergy.co.nz
Issued	31 July 2026

What Happened

A contractor operator was moving material with a wheel loader on wet, soft ground when the front right wheel sank into a softened area while approaching a stockpile at a slight angle. The loader became unstable and tipped onto its side against the pile. No one was injured and an exclusion zone meant no other personnel were in the vicinity.

Ground conditions had been identified as a hazard at the start of the day and discussed in the tailgate meeting. Several loads had been moved without issue before the event, the ground had deteriorated at that specific point since the earlier check.



Key Learnings Identified

Wet weather doesn't just make the ground generally soft- it creates localised soft spots that can be very different from what a walkover an hour or a day earlier picked up.

A hazard identified once at the start of the day (walkover, tailgate talk) is not the same as that hazard being managed for the rest of the shift. Ground conditions in wet weather need to be reassessed as work continues, not just checked once.

Approach stockpiles square to the face wherever practicable — an angled approach reduces the machine's stability margin if a wheel does sink.

Success on previous loads doesn't mean the next one is safe - conditions can change metre by metre across a work area.

What To Do On Site

- Before operating mobile plant on wet or previously-wet ground, visually check the specific ground you're about to work on, not just the general area.
- If ground conditions are changing through the day, stop and reassess before continuing — don't rely on the morning check alone.
- Keep loaders and similar plant square to the stockpile face when loading or dumping.
- If in doubt about ground bearing capacity, stop and talk to your supervisor before continuing the task