

Excavator slides into river at Bala Falls hydro plant construction site



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Construction at the Bala Falls Hydro plant was brought to a temporary halt Tuesday morning after an excavator slid into the Moon River.

“Last night an excavator edged into the Moon River while undertaking excavation work at the Bala Falls site. All the on-site crew are safe with no injuries reported,” said Swift River Energy spokesperson Nhugn Nguyen.

The company says the incident happened around 3 a.m. during the night shift. The operator was able to escape the cabin safely.

“Before the work started, we did follow the normal safety procedures and reminded everyone of the procedures to follow,” said Nguyen.

Another excavator and a heavy tow truck were used to pull the machine out of the water.



(Photo Cred: Carrie Bain/ March 26, 2019)

Swift River is now investigating the circumstances that lead to the incident.

“It’s too early speculate,” said Nguyen. “Did we follow proper procedures and protocols? What was he doing at the time and what were the surrounding conditions?”

The company has also notified the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks and the Ministry of Labour.

Officials don’t believe the excavator spilled fuel into the river, but a second containment net was placed in the water around the site following the incident for additional protection.

“We do know that the back of the excavator where the fuel tank was did not submerge in the water,” said Nguyen.



(Photo Cred: Carrie Bain / March 26, 2019)

The Township of Muskoka Lakes has also reported the incident to the Ontario's Spills Action Centre.

"Though this is technically out of the jurisdiction of the township, in conjunction with the district, we will continue to request CRT and Swift River Energy Limited to do everything in their power to avoid incidents of this nature going forward as construction activities on the power plant shift from the water to land," said Mayor Phil Harding in a press release.

Township officials will continue to monitor the incident.