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# Police Journal

“He was bleeding profusely as he was on blood thinners. It initially appeared that both legs had been severed.”

## CRUSHED!





By Brett Williams



# CRUSH

Stuck under two tons of iron with both his legs broken, Jim McCluskey might easily have died. And it was the kind of workplace injury which just never seemed likely.

**Bad luck** had plagued Senior Constable Jim McCluskey whenever it came to accidents. He never had the good fortune of others, like Formula One drivers who emerge injury-free after their cars flip and burst into flames.

Once a passenger in a car which slammed into an Adelaide Stobie pole, he suffered broken ribs and struggled to breathe until paramedics arrived.

Even in the US he became the victim of a serious crash in the mid-1990s. Hit by a



# ED!

four-wheel-drive vehicle as he was out cycling one day, McCluskey wound up with his leg “smashed”.

As a cyclist, he came off his bike many times, broke bones, and underwent major operations. And he commonly suffered, but survived, injuries in his youth when he took part in extreme sports like drag racing.

But, in 2020, he lay unconscious on a concrete floor with his legs crushed under an old two-ton bank safe at

Southern Exhibit Property. The safe had toppled off a forklift. And this last episode of bad luck was the worst, as McCluskey was no certainty to survive.

The safe was one of two which he and his colleagues had intended to reposition. Each iron structure, in the only air-conditioned room in the Edwardstown building, was taking up desperately needed space for DNA exhibits.

“DNA’s coming in all the time,” McCluskey says. “There was no reason for two safes to be in an air-conditioned room. They’ve only got money, gold, valuables, watches, and things like that in them.

“There would’ve been a huge amount of room with the safes gone. I would’ve estimated (room for) another two years’ worth of DNA coming in.”

Frustrating to Southern Exhibit Property staff was the constant lack of funding for any measures to create space.

“So, we got together,” McCluskey says, “did a risk assessment, and had a little hand-controlled, walk-behind forklift. And we

didn’t have very far to go to move these safes.

“I decided we would move them from the air-conditioned room and down the corridor, probably 30 metres away. Put them in the drug room. Simple.”

So, McCluskey, and one of his colleagues operating the forklift, got the move underway. And, once in the drug room, it was critical to lower the first safe with as much exactness as possible into its new position.

Were safes as heavy as these to end up any distance out of place, it would be an agonizing task to manoeuvre them again. McCluskey, knowing precisely where this first safe had to go, guided the forklift operator.

“More,” he indicated, “a little more,” until the safe was hard up against a solid concrete wall. The forklift operator then lowered it to the ground without a hitch, and McCluskey exclaimed: “lovely job”.

His next words, as he delighted in the successful repositioning of safe No. 1, were “let’s go get the second one”. And that was, and remains, all that McCluskey remembers of that April afternoon.