

Orchard Laborer Falls from Aerial Lift

Industry: Orchard

Task: Maintaining shade cloth system

Occupation: Orchard laborer

Type of Incident: Fall from aerial lift





INJURY NARRATIVE

On May 6, 2015, a 29-year-old orchard laborer fell from the elevated basket of an aerial lift and suffered a serious head injury.

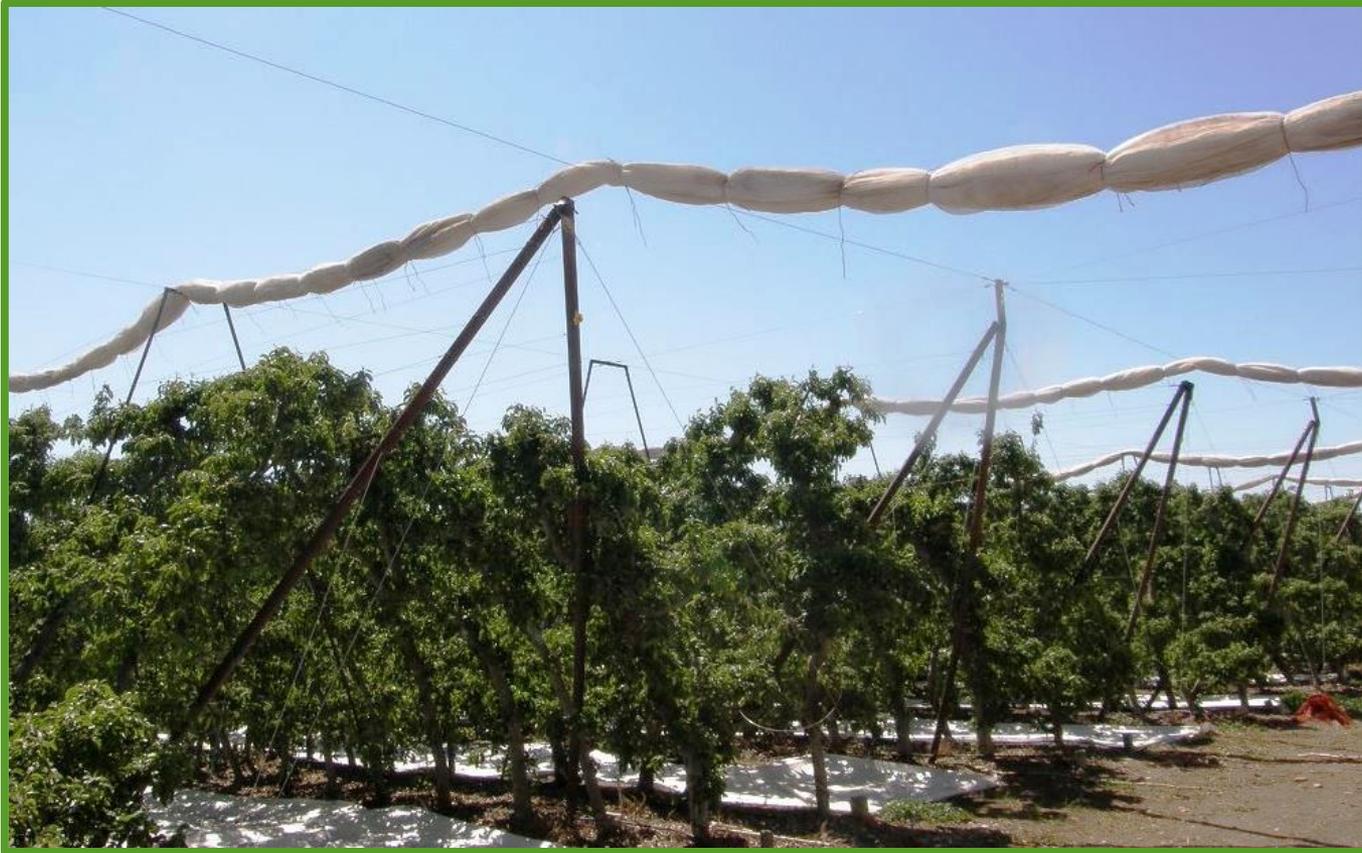
The laborer had five years' experience working in orchards, two of which were with at his employer's orchard. He had received safety training relating to his job duties from his employer.

During the growing season, his full-time duties included maintaining the orchard shade cloth system. Horizontal cable wires 17 to 20 feet high supported by poles allowed cloth to be rolled out like a curtain to provide shade for trees. He and other employees worked to extend and roll up the shade cloth as well as maintain the cable system that supports the cloth.

On the day of the incident, the laborer was using a three-wheeled aerial lift to access the shade cloth system in order to roll out the cloth. He was working from the lift's elevated basket. He had previously operated this type of lift. He was not using a fall protection harness with a lanyard attached to the basket. As he was manually moving the shade cloth, the supporting cable wire snapped and knocked him out of the basket. He fell 17 feet from the basket to the ground. He was knocked unconscious and taken to a hospital where he was diagnosed with a skull fracture and a traumatic brain injury. He suffered numerous complications related to his injury and was still unable to return to work more than a year later.



The laborer, who was not using fall protection, fell 17 feet from the elevated aerial lift basket. He was maintaining the shade cloth system (shown here) in his employer's orchard.



Employer's orchard showing the tree shade cloth system.



INJURY NARRATIVE

Requirements

- The manufacturer's instructional manual, if any, must be used to establish the proper operational sequences and maintenance procedures. If there is no manual, you must develop instructions. The instructions must be available for reference by operators.

See [WAC 296-307-27010\(1\)](#)

- Only employees qualified by training or experience may operate aerial manlifts.

See [WAC 296-307-27010\(3\)](#)



INJURY NARRATIVE

Recommendations

Ensure that all persons on the platform of boom supported elevating work platforms wear a body belt or full body harness and lanyard fixed to the manufacturer provided and approved attachment points to prevent workers from being ejected from the platform or in the event that they do fall from the platform their fall will be arrested.



INJURY NARRATIVE

Recommendations

- Choose the appropriate fall protection system based on the manufacturer's specification or, if this is not available, on the type of elevating work platform to be used and the work activity.
- A personal fall restraint system will prevent persons on the elevating work platform from falling any distance. A fall restraint system should be preferred over a fall arrest system whenever possible.
- A fall arrest system should allow workers to move around the platform but provide a minimum of lanyard slack.

INJURY NARRATIVE



Orchard worker using fall protection (full body harness with lanyard) while working from a powered platform to maintain an orchard shade cloth system.



INJURY NARRATIVE

This narrative was developed to alert employers and employees of a serious traumatic injury to a worker in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the injury.

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