

Orchard Tractor Operator Run Over by Mower Attachment

Industry: Orchard

Task: Operating tractor pulling mower

Occupation: Orchard laborer/tractor operator

Type of Incident: Tractor-related/run over





FATALITY NARRATIVE

On April 29, 2013, a 25-year-old orchard laborer operating a tractor died when he fell from the tractor and was run over by a mower attachment.

The victim was operating a narrow-width, low-profile tractor with an attached mower mowing grass between rows of pear trees.

There were no witnesses, but based on evidence at the scene, investigators determined the probable sequence of events. As the victim was mowing, his head struck against a branch, causing his hat to fall to the ground. With the intention of retrieving his hat, he stopped the tractor. He placed the power take off (PTO) in neutral, which cut power to the mower blades. As he was preparing to get off the tractor, he failed to put the transmission lever in neutral. When he lifted his left foot off the clutch, the tractor lurched forward, causing him to fall off the tractor and onto the ground. The tractor, which was running and in gear, continued to move forward and the victim was run over by the 1740 lb. mower.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Incident scene where victim was operating a tractor mowing grass between rows of pear trees.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Requirements

- Instruct all employees in safe work practices at the beginning of employment. Instruction must be tailored to types of hazards to which employees are exposed. See WAC 307-030(1).
- Create a tractor training program which is described in a written accident prevention program. See WAC 296-307-030.
- Ensure that every employee who operates an agricultural tractor is informed that when the tractor is stopped they should set brakes securely and use park lock if available. See WAC296-307-08018(1)(9).



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Recommendations

Always shut down the tractor's engine and follow the manufacturer's recommended parking procedures before leaving the seat.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Recommendations

- Employers and tractor owners should consider purchasing or retrofitting tractors with an operator presence sensing system (OPSS). The OPSS shuts off the power to the tractor when the operator leaves the seat. This prevents inadvertent movement of the tractor should the operator attempt to dismount from the tractor without following proper parking procedures.
- Manufacturers of tractors should continue to develop, refine, and install OPSS.



Incident scene showing tractor with mower attachment.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Similar Tractor-related Deaths

Eight agricultural tractor operators died when they fell from tractors and were run over by the tractor and/or an attachment in Washington State during the period 1998-2013.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Statewide Statistics: This was number 17 of 52 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2013, and was number 2 of 6 agriculture-related fatalities.

This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of 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 fatality.

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