

# Fatality Narrative

## Electrician Apprentice Killed When Van Leaves Roadway and Crashes\*

**Industry:** Electrical contractors  
**Occupation:** Electrician apprentice  
**Task:** Driving van  
**Type of Incident:** Motor vehicle incident

**Release Date:** February, 25 2004  
**Case No.:** 03WA014  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-17-2004

On April 16, 2003, an electrician apprentice was killed when the company van he was driving on a four-lane divided state highway left the roadway and went down an embankment. The victim had just left a job site where he had delivered some materials and was driving back to the company office. He was wearing a seatbelt. At about 1:30 P.M. the van left the highway to the right and went down an embankment and struck two trees. There was massive front-end damage to the van. The impact of striking the trees caused a rack system used for storage of electrical equipment in the cargo area of the van to become loose and slide forward, pinning the victim against the steering column. Equipment from the cargo area was also thrown forward and struck the victim. The victim died at the scene. At the time of the incident it was raining and the road was wet. The temperature was about 50°F. According to the State Patrol the victim was driving at about 50 mph at the time of the incident. The posted speed limit was 60 mph. The toxicological report on the victim indicates that there was a sufficient amount of THC (marijuana) in his blood to have caused considerable impairment to his driving ability.

### Requirements/Recommendations (! Indicates items required by law)

- Train drivers in defensive driving practices.
- ! Install a cage between a vehicle's cargo area and the driver's seat to prevent tools and materials from moving forward. Secure all tools and materials that are in the same compartment with employees.
- ! Do not tolerate on the job drug and alcohol use.
- Conduct driver's license background checks before hiring drivers.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was the 15<sup>th</sup> work-related fatality in Washington State during the year 2003 and was the 4<sup>th</sup> motor vehicle collision-related fatality of the year.

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*This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees in a timely manner of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. The information in this notice 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.*

Developed by the Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) and Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) Programs at the WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program, 1-888-667-4277, <http://www.Lni.wa.gov/safety/research/face>.