

Fatality Narrative

Excavator Operator Killed When Excavator Rolls On Its Side*

Industry: New single-family housing construction.

Occupation: Heavy equipment operator.

Task: Backing excavator out of excavation.

Type of Incident: Machinery.

Release Date: February 8, 2009.

Case No.: 07WA06101.

SHARP Report No.: 71-79-2009.

On August 17, 2007, a heavy equipment operator died when an excavator rolled on to its side. The 48-year-old victim had worked for his employer, a new single-family housing construction contractor, for five months and had about 25 years experience as a heavy equipment operator. He was operating an excavator to dig a foundation for a single-family residence at a development located on hilly terrain. As he was exiting the excavation by backing the excavator over the lip of the excavation, it rolled on to its top and then came to rest on its side. Emergency help was called but the victim was declared dead at the scene of multiple internal injuries and blunt impact to the head.

Photo of incident scene with excavator on its side outside of excavation.



Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! Employers should ensure that equipment operators are provided with appropriate training, information, and instruction on how to maneuver their equipment on difficult terrain.
- ! Employees shall report the existence of any unsafe equipment or method or any other hazard, which is unsafe in their work operation to the employer for corrective action.
- The equipment operator needs to have a clear understanding of the stability dynamics of driving their particular equipment on poor or uneven ground, hilly terrain, soft ground, potholes or driving over curbs for example.
- The operator should follow the equipment manufacturer's recommendations regarding proper equipment operation on uneven surfaces and hilly terrain.
- Using a ROPS equipped excavator or retrofitting a ROPS (Roll Over Protection System) to the excavator would help prevent fatal injuries in the event of an equipment roll over.
- Employers should explore installing active warning devices to alert operators when the machine's slope limits are approached.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 57th out of 80 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2007, and was the 12th out of 16 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. 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) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). 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/>.