



# FATALITY NARRATIVE

## Farm Laborer Killed by Falling 1,500 lb Hay Bale\*

**Industry:** Hay farming  
**Task:** Untarpering stacked bales of hay  
**Occupation:** Farm laborer  
**Type of Incident:** Struck by falling object

**Release Date:** October 1, 2012  
**Incident Date:** February 14, 2012  
**Case No.:** 12WA008  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-114-2012

On February 14, 2012, a hay farm laborer died when a hay bale fell on him. The 62-year-old victim had worked for 38 years as a laborer at his employer's hay farm. His job duties included helping with planting and maintaining hay fields, followed by harvesting, baling, stacking, and loading hay onto trucks for delivery to customers. On the day of the incident, the victim and a coworker were preparing to remove a canvas tarp covering stacked bales of alfalfa hay so that bales could be loaded onto a truck. The bales were approximately 1,500 lb, 3x4x8 foot, and stacked six high in two rows of twenty bales, with a center row placed on top. They were working on opposite sides of the stacks untying the anchor ropes used to secure the tarp. As the victim walked around the end of the stack, three bales fell from the end row, with one of them landing on top of him. A coworker used a materials handler to lift the bale from the victim. He was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.



### Requirements

- Ensure that bales stored in layers are secured against collapse. See WAC 296-307-230(2).
- When removing material stored in piles, ensure that material is removed in a manner that maintains the stability of the pile and prevents collapse. See WAC 296-307-230(5).
- Ensure that first-aid trained employees are available to provide quick and effective first-aid. See WAC 296-307-03905.

### Recommendations

- Employers should train and supervise employees:
  - How to choose a safe method of stacking bales that is appropriate for the size, shape, and type of bale.
    - The best methods will vary depending on whether the bale is rectangular, round, large, or small.
    - Consider a stacking method where the stack has a wide base that narrows slightly as it gets higher and has alternating and overlapping layers of bales so that the bales are interlocked for stability.
  - How to safely stack and unstack hay bales.
  - To be aware that bales may settle and shift during drying, making them potentially unstable and susceptible to collapsing and falling from the stack.
  - To always check there are no signs of bale shifting or stack instability prior to removing a storage tarp.

*\*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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