

# Fatality Narrative

## Loader Operator Struck by Hopper Lid at Asphalt Batch Plant\*

**Industry:** Asphalt batch plant/Road paving  
**Occupation:** Loader operator  
**Task:** Changing screen decks on asphalt batch tower  
**Type of Incident:** Struck by hopper lid

**Release Date:** January 31, 2005  
**Case No.:** 04WA01501  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-30-2005

On February 23, 2004, a 500-pound hopper lid fell on a worker at an asphalt batch plant. The victim was doing maintenance work on an asphalt hopper unit, located on the top of a batch tower. The 40-year-old loader operator and another worker were performing routine maintenance work by changing screen decks on a hopper used to mix aggregate for paving material. Both workers had performed this task many times. To change the screen decks, the workers needed to access the screen head housing. They opened the 500-pound hinged lid with a chain come-a-long. When the lid was past its center of gravity, they let it rest on the housing and removed the come-a-long. The lid was left unsecured. The victim then attached the come-a-long to the first screen deck that was to be removed from the assembly frame. He started removing the screen deck, when the lid fell on him, pinning his upper body inside the chute. Co-workers attempted to rescue him, but emergency responders declared the victim dead at the scene. The coroner's office indicated that compression asphyxia was the cause of death.

### Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- Before beginning work, conduct both initial and daily jobsite surveys to identify hazards, and implement appropriate controls.
- ! Employers must develop and use procedures to control the unexpected release of all energy sources, including gravity, during maintenance activities. In this incident, the hopper lid should have been restrained, which would have protected the victim from the gravitational energy source of the falling lid.
- Plan and perform your work in a manner that will prevent objects from falling on yourself or other persons working below.
- Never position yourself underneath a suspended load or object, materials, machines or equipment that can fall and result in a serious injury or fatal incident.
- Before removing come-a-longs and other rigging equipment, make sure that the equipment or material being maneuvered by the come-a-long etc. is stable and secured.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was the 14<sup>th</sup> out of 91 work-related fatalities in Washington State during the year 2004, and was the 4<sup>th</sup> out of 17 construction-related fatalities during 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.*

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