

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Orchard Supervisor Run Over by Tractor and Attached Tank Sprayer

Industry: Apple orchards

Task: Repairing tank sprayer

Occupation: Orchard supervisor

Type of Incident: Run over / Machinery





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On July 4, 2012, an apple orchard supervisor died when a tractor and an attached tank sprayer ran over him while he was making repairs to the sprayer.

The 44-year-old victim had worked at the orchard for 16 years. On the day of the incident, the victim was changing a tire of the sprayer in the yard outside the orchard's repair shop.

The sprayer was attached to a tractor that was more than 30 years old. Another worker left a note for the victim explaining that the sprayer was not getting enough pressure and then went to get parts so that the victim could complete the changing of the tire. In order to check the pressure jets or to adjust the position of the sprayer, the victim started the tractor while standing beside it. As he did so, the tractor and the attached sprayer moved forward and he was run over by their wheels.

An investigation determined that the tractor was left in gear and had a defective ignition switch which allowed the tractor to start while in gear. Also, several employees were aware of the broken ignition switch, but did not report it to the orchard manager.



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Requirements

Ensure that employees do not use defective or unsafe tools and equipment.

See WAC 296-307-018(2).



Photo of orchard tank sprayer similar to the sprayer involved in the incident.



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Recommendations

Employers should always:

- Take defective equipment out of service until it is repaired and safe to operate.
 - *The tractor had a defective ignition switch which allowed the tractor to start while in gear.*
- Train employees and ensure that they follow safe procedures when parking, starting or repairing tractors.



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Recommendations

Employees should be sure to:

- Never start a tractor engine from anywhere but the operator's seat.
 - *The victim started the tractor while standing beside it.*
- Follow the manufacturer's recommended procedures when starting and parking a tractor.



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Recommendations

- Never leave a tractor in gear when parking.
 - *The tractor was left in gear*
- Report broken or unsafe equipment.
 - *Several employees were aware of the broken ignition switch, but did not report it to the orchard manager.*

Statewide Statistics: This was number 30 of 62 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2012, and was number 4 of 7 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.* Developed by WA 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.