

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Backhoe Operator Crushed by Boom

Industry: Hay farming

Task: Clearing rocks from field

Occupation: Heavy equipment operator/laborer

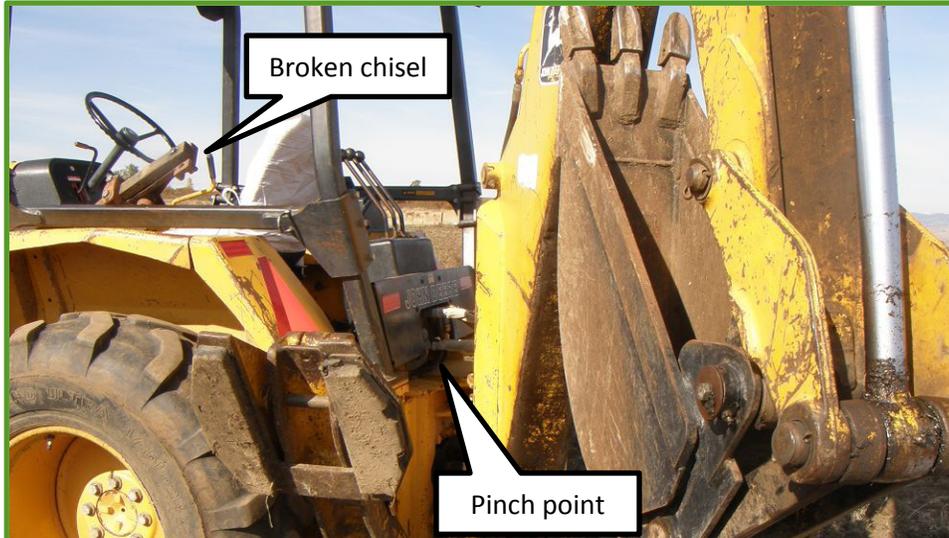
Type of Incident: Machine-related/crushed between

Incident Date: October 15, 2013

Release Date: October 1, 2014

SHARP Report No.: 71-133-2014

Case No.: 13WA03601



A backhoe operator was caught and crushed in the pinch point between the boom and stabilizer when he accidentally activated the boom swing pedal.

On October 15, 2013, a 37-year-old heavy equipment operator/farm laborer died when he unintentionally caused a backhoe's boom to move, crushing him between the boom and a stabilizer. The victim had worked at a hay farm for two seasons operating heavy equipment and providing other labor as needed. He had 20 years' experience operating heavy equipment. The employer had provided on-the-job training to the victim to ensure that he understood how to safely operate the equipment he was assigned to operate. On the day of the incident, the victim was assigned the task of clearing a field of large rocks. Another worker had used a chisel plow to till the field. The victim was using a backhoe's loader to

scoop up the rocks and carry them from the field. As he was doing this task, he noticed a metal chisel which had broken off the plow lying on the ground. He stopped the backhoe and set its brakes, but did not turn off the engine. He got out of the cab and walked over to the curved three-foot long, 50 lb. chisel and picked it up. He then walked to the rear of the backhoe and while standing between the raised boom and the raised stabilizer, he placed the chisel in the cab. The chisel struck the right boom-swing foot pedal which activated the boom causing it to move, pinning and crushing him between the boom and the stabilizer.

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Requirements

- The manufacturer's instruction manual must be the source of information for the safe operation and maintenance of field equipment. See [WAC 296-307-076\(2\)](http://WAC 296-307-076(2)).
- Develop a written accident prevention program tailored to the needs of your agricultural operation and to the types of hazards involved. See [WAC 296-307-030\(2\)](http://WAC 296-307-030(2)).
- Provide employee safety education and training programs which include information about agricultural equipment hazards and safe work practices. See [WAC 296-307-018\(6\)](http://WAC 296-307-018(6)).

Recommendations

- Ensure that backhoe boom and swing lock pins are installed when backhoe is not being used.
- Do not place objects in the cab which could accidentally depress the boom foot pedal.
- Shut down the equipment's engine and follow the manufacturer's recommended parking procedures before leaving the operator's station.
- To prevent unintentional activation of the backhoe boom, manufacturers and regulators should consider requiring the use of foot pedal guards or some other method to disable the control when not in use.

Statewide Statistics: This was number 41 of 54 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2013, and was number 4 of 6 agriculture-related fatalities.

This narrative 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 grant# 5 U60 OH008487-09). For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program. 1-888-667-4277.