



# FATALITY NARRATIVE

## Farm Laborer Dies from Heat Stroke\*

**Industry:** Crop farming  
**Task:** Cutting weeds with a machete  
**Occupation:** Farm laborer  
**Type of Incident:** Exposure to excessive heat

**Release Date:** May 10, 2010  
**Incident Date:** July 18, 2005  
**Case No.:** 05WA04201  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-91-2010

On July 18, 2005, a 64-year-old farm laborer collapsed from heat stroke while working in a hop yard. The victim had worked as an agricultural laborer for about 40 years. On the day of the incident the victim and five other field laborers started work at 5am cutting weeds with machetes in a hop field. The victim told a coworker that he was not feeling well and was observed to be coughing. As he worked he fell behind the other workers. Around 10:30am the victim stopped to eat some food and drink water. He complained of being really hot. A coworker noticed that he was not sweating. At about 11:30am the crew left the field for lunch. When the victim did not show up, a couple of coworkers went to look for him. They found him lying face down and unresponsive. They moved him to shade and called for an ambulance. He was taken to a hospital where he died of heat stroke. The daytime high temperature was estimated to be 101 degrees.



Incident scene showing hop field where a laborer was cutting weeds when he collapsed.

### Requirements

- ! Train employees and supervisors to recognize heat-related illness and what to do if someone has symptoms. Symptoms include fatigue, dizziness, and light headedness. See [WAC 296-62-09560](#)
- ! Monitor yourself and your coworkers for signs or symptoms of heat-related illness. See [WAC 296-62-09560 \(1\)\(g\)](#)
- ! On days when temperatures require preventive measures, increase the volume of water available to employees. Should be one quart per employee per hour. See [WAC 296-62-09510](#) and [WAC 296-62-09540](#)
- ! Be prepared to appropriately respond to any employee with symptoms of heat-related illness. Responses include removal from duty and possible medical attention. See [WAC 296-62-09550](#)

### Recommendations

- Drink water frequently. The rule of thumb is a cup of water every 15 minutes. Don't wait for thirst before taking a drink.
- Take more breaks in high heat. Take breaks in the shade or a cool area when possible.
- Wear light colored, loose-fitting breathable clothing such as cotton.
- Do the heavier work early in the morning or in the evening when it is cooler.
- NEVER ignore the signs or symptoms of heat-related illness.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was number 39 out of 81 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2005, and was number 3 out of 4 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 Washington State [Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation \(FACE\)](#) 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.



SHARP-Research for Safe Work

