

Fatality Narrative

Laborer Killed When Backed Over by Water Truck in Highway Work Zone*

Industry: Site preparation contractors.

Occupation: Laborer/Pipe layer.

Task: Providing labor support to roadway paving project.

Type of Incident: Stuck by construction vehicle/Highway work zone.

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Case No.: 08WA01801.

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On March 27, 2008, a laborer/pipe layer was struck from behind and run over by a backing-up water truck at a highway work zone. The 54-year-old victim, a laborer and pipe layer and a member of the Laborers' Union, had been employed by his employer for 22 years. The victim was providing labor support inside the temporary traffic control activity area where a new roadway surface was being constructed next to an existing state highway to widen the roadway. There were three construction vehicles operating in the work zone, including a grader, compaction machine, and water truck. The driver of the 3-axle, 3500 gallon water truck was tasked with wetting down sections of roadbed material. The driver of the truck checked his mirrors and began reversing with the backup alarm sounding. It is unknown what the victim was doing at this time or why he entered this area of the work zone, but it appears that he was walking away from the backing truck, which caught up with him and struck him. The victim was in the driver's blind spot. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

The 3-axle, 3500-gallon water truck near the incident scene.



Requirements/Recommendations (! Indicates items required by code)

- ! If a driver/operator has an obstructed view while backing vehicles/equipment then an operational automatic back up alarm must be in operation.
- ! If back alarms are not effective due to the surrounding noise level then a spotter must be used to signal the operator/driver when it is safe for the vehicle/equipment to back up.
- Develop and utilize an "Internal Traffic Control Plan" for each road construction project.
- Construction vehicles and equipment have limited ranges of visibility. Use a spotter to provide direction for trucks and heavy equipment backing up in work zones. Construction vehicles and equipment have limited ranges of visibility.
- Highway work zones should be designed to avoid, as much as possible, backing up of vehicles and equipment.
- Construction vehicles should be equipped with additional visual or sensing devices to cover operator "blind spots."
- Mechanical and engineering controls should be utilized when possible to eliminate any worker exposure to vehicles in the work zone.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 18th out of 72 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2008, and was the 5th out of 18 construction-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. 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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