

Fatality Narrative

Laborer Dies Attempting to Stop Runaway Work Vehicle*

Industry: Highway construction

Occupation: Laborer

Task: Attempting to gain control of unoccupied rolling truck

Type of Incident: Motor vehicle incident

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On September 12, 2006, a road construction laborer was fatally injured while attempting to stop a runaway work vehicle. The 19-year-old victim had a little over one year of experience as a construction laborer, most of which was with his current employer, a manufacturer and installer of roadway signs. On the day of the fatal incident the victim and a co-worker were completing the installation of a road sign alongside a stretch of rural mountain road where they had been installing signs for the past week. The two workers had used a truck-mounted auger to drill a hole and set the sign post, and were in the process of backfilling the hole. The auger truck was parked on an incline with a grade of about 1 ½ to 2 percent. As they were finishing the job, the unoccupied auger truck began to roll down the road. The victim ran after the moving truck and entered through the passenger door. He attempted to control the vehicle as it gathered speed along the road until it crashed through a guardrail, went down an embankment and caught fire. The victim was declared dead at the scene. An investigation determined that wheel chocks were not used to block the truck's tires, the truck's engine had been running, and both the PTO and the power lock braking system were engaged. It was unknown whether the parking brake had been set.



Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! Before leaving a vehicle unattended, the motor must be stopped, and the parking brake set.
- ! Chock or otherwise secure the wheels of motor vehicles parked on an incline where there is no curb or berm at a construction site.
- ! Employers should ensure that employees are properly trained in procedures for securing vehicles parked on inclines, including the use of wheel chocks.
- ! Power lock braking systems are meant to supplement a vehicle's parking brake, not substitute for it.
- ! Employers should ensure that all work vehicles are maintained in proper working condition.
- Never attempt to enter a moving vehicle.

State Wide Statistics: This was the 40th out of 81 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2006, and was the 21st out of 23 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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SHARP – Promoting Safer, Healthier Workplaces

