

# Fatality Narrative

## Operator Killed When Tractor Rolls Over\*

**Industry:** Land Subdivision  
**Occupation:** Tractor operator  
**Task:** Mowing grass and brush  
**Type of Incident:** Tractor rollover

**Release Date:** April 4, 2006  
**Case No.:** 05WA04101  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-45-2006

On July 25, 2005, a tractor operator was killed at a job site when the tractor rolled over, and crushed him. The 21-year-old victim was employed by a land subdivision contractor who bought and sold vacant land to be developed for the building of new residential homes. The victim was a college student who had taken the job for the summer and had been working for this employer for about two months. His job was to operate a Kubota compact tractor with a rear-mounted mower or “brush hog” to cut grass and brush so as to maintain vacant land for the housing development. He was not trained in the safe operation of this tractor. Prior to the fatal incident the victim was driving the tractor with the brush hog attachment along an old tractor trail. He was being followed by two co-workers who were riding 4-wheeled all-terrain vehicles. According to a witness, the victim was driving the tractor fast and they were “horsing-around.” The victim looked over his shoulder and lost control of the tractor as he was going around a bend. He was ejected from the tractor as it rolled over, and the rollover protective structure (ROPS), or roll bar, crushed him. The tractor had a seatbelt, but the victim was not wearing it. He was declared dead at the scene from blunt chest trauma.

### Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by law)

- ! Employers must provide initial training that includes seatbelt usage and the need to reduce speed when turning or operating on slopes.
- ! Only employees qualified by training or experience shall operate equipment and machinery. Refresher training must be provided at least annually.
- ! All personnel must wear a seat belt when operating a tractor equipped with a ROPS. Failure to wear a seat belt in the event of a rollover could most likely result in injury or death of the operator.
- ! Employers must prohibit and control employee horseplay at anytime while on the job and especially while operating agricultural or industrial tractors and other mobile or mechanical equipment.
- ! Always maintain a safe operating speed. Reducing speed can reduce the effects of turns and bumps, and allows for better control of the tractor.
- Operators should avoid driving tractors near ditches, embankments and holes.

**State Wide Statistics:** This was the 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 79 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2005, and was the 4<sup>th</sup> out of 9 construction-related fatalities.

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*This bulletin was developed at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries to alert employers and employees in a timely manner of a tragic loss of life of a worker in Washington State. We encourage you to consider the above information as you make safety decisions for or recommendations to your company or constituency. 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.*

Developed by the Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) and Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA) Programs at the WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported 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, <http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE>.

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