

## Farm Laborer Dies When UTV Struck by Vehicle

**Industry: Wheat Farms**

**Task: Using UTV to check flooded fields**

**Occupation: Farm laborer**

**Type of Incident: Struck by motor vehicle**





# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

In April 2016, a 35-year-old wheat farm laborer died when the Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) he was operating on a state highway was struck by a motor vehicle.

On the day of the incident, the victim and another worker took their employer's UTV (also known as a side-by-side) to check for flooded farm fields. The six-wheel, three-seat UTV was equipped with a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and seatbelts. Neither the victim nor the passenger were wearing seatbelts or employer provided helmets.

Although the UTV was unlicensed for on-road travel, the victim drove it onto the highway to gain access to a dirt road. The highway had a posted speed limit of 55 MPH.



# *FATALITY NARRATIVE*

The UTV traveled along the highway's fog line at about 20 to 25 MPH for nearly a mile before slowing to make a left turn. The victim looked back over his shoulder to make sure that there were no approaching vehicles. The UTV was not equipped with a turn signal, though it did have a door-mounted review mirror.

As he began making the turn, a pickup truck approaching from the rear attempted to pass the UTV. The truck struck the UTV's left front corner. The impact caused the UTV to roll over and land on its passenger side, ejecting both occupants. The victim landed in the road and the passenger in a ditch.

Medics arrived and took them to a hospital. The victim died of head injuries three days later; the passenger had minor injuries.



# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

The UTV manufacturer operator's manual stated that the operator and passengers should wear a helmet and use a seatbelt. It further stated that users should not operate the UTV on public or paved roads.

Investigators found that the employer had provided helmets and instructed employees to use them, told them to follow UTV manufacturer's safety instructions, and had provided a trailer to haul the UTV to farm locations to avoid travel on public roads.

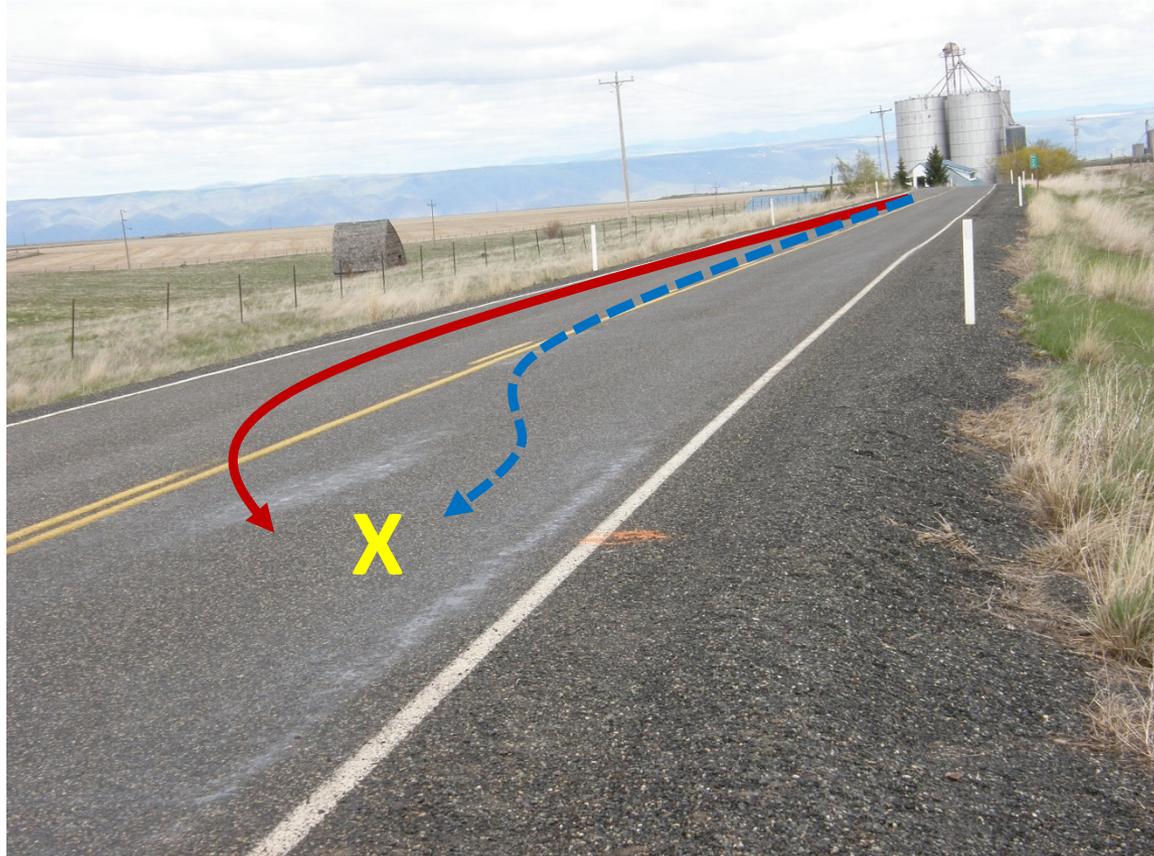


UTV after the incident showing the damaged left front that was struck by the pickup truck.



Incident scene showing the state highway along which the UTV was traveling when it was struck by a pickup truck attempting to pass (the arrow indicates the direction of travel of both UTV and pickup truck). The UTV was slowing down and had crossed the center line so as to turn onto a road leading into a field.

# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***



Incident scene showing the direction of travel of the UTV and pickup truck along the state highway. The solid red line indicates where the UTV began to turn left across highway. The dashed blue line indicates where the pickup truck attempted to pass the slow-moving UTV. The “X” indicates where the two vehicles collided.



# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

## **Requirements**

- Employers must provide personal protective equipment to employees.

See [WAC 296-307-10005](#)

- Ensure that employees use personal protective equipment, such as in this case a helmet and seat belts, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

See [WAC 296-307-10015\(1\)](#)



# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

## **Recommendations**

Manufacturers have designed and equipped UTVs and ATVs for off road use. Employers should follow the manufacturer's safety guidelines and not let their employees drive these vehicles on public paved roads.



# *FATALITY NARRATIVE*

## Recommendations

- As part of their accident prevention program, employers should do a job hazard analysis (JHA) of tasks involving farm equipment that may pose risks. Employees should be involved in creating the JHA. In this case, the employer and employees could have come up with a safer way to check the fields.

[www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AToZ/JHA](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AToZ/JHA)

- **Always** wear a DOT-compliant helmet and seatbelt when operating a UTV.



# ***FATALITY NARRATIVE***

*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) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), Washington 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# 2 U60OH008487). For more information, contact the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program, 1-888-667-4277.