

Fatality Narrative

Well Driller Helper Killed When Stationary Well Drilling Truck Tips Over

Industry: Water well drilling.
Occupation: Well driller helper.
Task: Attempting to free truck stuck in mud.
Type of Incident: Struck by.

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On July 20, 2007, a well driller helper died trying to free a well drilling truck stuck in the mud when it toppled over and pinned him underneath the rig. The 33-year-old victim had worked for the water well drilling company for the past three months. The well driller with 16-years experience and helper (the victim) had finished a well drilling job they had begun the day before. They were using a truck-mounted water well drill that had a total vehicle weight of about 70,000 lbs. It had been raining hard on and off for the past two days. As they were driving the truck away from the drilling site, the driver's side tires started to sink into soft, wet dirt, causing the truck to lean to the side on a ten percent slope. They backed up a few feet, stopped the truck, and put down the stabilizer jacks in the front and back of the truck. The victim placed 4' x 8' fiberglass "mud mats" under the truck in order to give the wheels some traction in the wet soil. The driller went to the rear of the truck to the stabilizer control station to raise the stabilizers so he could drive the truck onto the mats. Before he was able to do that, the victim went to the driver's side of the truck. Suddenly, the truck tipped over on the driver's side, striking and crushing the victim underneath.

Well drilling truck viewed from the rear at incident scene

Requirements/Recommendations

(! Indicates items required by code)

- ! The employer needs to make sure everyone involved in the well drilling operations have the skills and knowledge required to operate the well drilling rig, and are able to set up the rig on stable and on unstable ground.
- ! Each work area needs to be inspected, all potential hazards identified and appropriate control measures need to be applied for each hazard identified.
- ! Qualified operators must ensure outrigger's and stabilizers are deployed, positioned and retracted according to the manufacturer's instructions
- The ground needs to be checked before and after parking the vehicle to ensure it is on firm enough to bear the load of the rig and equipment.
- ! The employer must provide training programs to improve the skill and competency of all employees in well drilling safety.
- ! The employer shall permit only those employees qualified by training or experience to operate equipment and machinery.
- ! The employer must have a written incident (accident) prevention program that specifically addresses hazards employees are likely to encounter with well drilling operations.



State Wide Statistics: This was the 46th out of 80 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2007, and was the 9th out of 16 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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