



# FATALITY NARRATIVE

## Laborer Struck by Boom of Excavator When it Tips Over\*

**Industry:** Site preparation contractors  
**Task:** Assisting excavator operator set concrete septic box in trench  
**Occupation:** Laborer  
**Type of Incident:** Struck by / Machinery

**Release Date:** November 3, 2010  
**Incident Date:** September 26, 2008  
**Case No.:** 08WA04801  
**SHARP Report No.:** 71-96-2010

On September 26, 2008, a construction laborer died when he was struck by the boom of an excavator when it tipped over. His job as a laborer involved checking grades and ensuring that elevations were correct and guiding and spotting the excavator operator. On the day of the incident, the victim and the excavator operator were placing a concrete septic tank in an excavation at a residence. The septic tank measured 6'x6'x10' and weighed 10,290 lbs. They were working in a tight space on a mild slope with a steep slope to one side. The operator positioned the excavator to make a side lift (boom not parallel with the tracks) of the septic tank. The boom was extended about 40% during the lift and while lowering the tank into the excavation. As the operator boomed out the load, the load went over the excavator's maximum weight lifting capacity and the excavator tipped over. The boom struck the victim who was standing on the spoils pile on the other side of the excavation. The 26-year-old victim had worked for a site preparation contractor for about a year and the operator had worked with his employer for two years.



Incident scene with tipped over excavator and septic tank.

### Requirements

- ! Train equipment operators to safely operate equipment they are assigned to use. See [WAC 296-155-100](#)
- ! Only those trained and qualified should operated equipment. See [WAC 296-155-035](#)
- ! Load charts must be mounted inside the excavator cab. See [WAC 296-155-615](#)
- ! The operator needs to stay within the load limits and ratios of the equipment manufacturer. See [WAC 296-155-615](#)
- ! Workers should stay clear of all loads being hoisted so as to avoid being struck by material or equipment. See [WAC 296-155-655](#)

### Recommendations

- ✓ Train and require operators to use load charts for each lift and stay within or below safe load limits.
- ✓ Position excavator tracks for optimum lifting especially on steep slopes, loose soil, and near excavations or trenches.
- ✓ Ensure that all workers are safely out of the way of equipment during lifts.
- ✓ Do not allow workers to stand in the fall path of suspended loads or machine components.
- ✓ Plan for the unexpected when lifting or moving heavy objects by using a lift specific hazard analysis checklist tool.

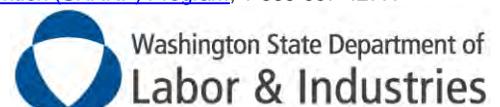
**State Wide Statistics:** This was number 50 out of 72 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2008, and was number 14 out of 18 construction-related fatalities.

*\*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.*

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