

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Truck Driver Hauling Grain Dies When Truck Crashes

Industry: Wheat Farming

Task: Hauling load of grain

Occupation: Truck driver

Type of Incident: Motor vehicle crash





FATALITY NARRATIVE

In August of 2016, the 55-year-old driver of a grain truck died when his truck's brakes were unable to slow the truck and it left the road and crashed into a building.

The victim was employed to help during the harvest of wheat on a family member's farm. He was being paid for his work. He had over 25 years experience driving commercial vehicles. The truck, manufactured in 1988, was purchased by the employer the previous year. For the past three weeks, he had been working 10 to 11 hours per day, 6 days per week. The victim primarily made his living as a pastor in the local community. He also drove a school bus and worked as an on-call fireman. During previous harvests, he had worked for other farmers in the area and had driven many types of trucks. He had a valid CDL.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

On the day of the incident, his last before he went on vacation, he was driving a tandem-axle grain truck pulling a pup trailer, both fully loaded with wheat. This vehicle was used only during the harvest. According to the employer, before being put into service for the harvest, the truck had been checked and everything was adjusted properly. He was on the way to a nearby town to make a delivery to a grain elevator. He had made many trips with full loads to this elevator, including one earlier in the day.

As he was driving along a state highway carrying approximately 60,000 lbs of wheat, he started down a long hill on the outskirts of town. The brakes were insufficient to slow the truck's descent. Attempting to slow down the truck, he used the Jake brake, downshifted, and applied what little brakes he had. As the truck entered the town a witness estimated that it was travelling at about 50 mph. The truck left the road, entered a dirt covered lot and then crashed into the grain elevator's scale house where he was to make his delivery. The victim died at the scene.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Investigators determined that the brakes had been in disrepair for some time and that out of twelve brakes, only four were working properly. According to State Patrol, as the victim downshifted while descending the hill he likely missed a gear and was unable to get the transmission back into gear; this caused the truck to gather speed. The four remaining functional brakes were not sufficient to stop the truck.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Incident scene showing truck and trailer after impacting the building when the vehicle's brakes failed. The piles of grain resulted when the grain was spilled from the trailers.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Roadway descending a hill along which the truck was traveling when it began to lose its braking. At the bottom of the hill is the town where the truck ended up after crashing.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Skip skid tire friction marks were made in the pavement by the right side drop axle of the truck in an attempt by the driver to slow the vehicle. These marks were evident on roads for a mile and a half before the vehicle crashed.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Incident scene showing tire tracks leading to the building where the semi-truck crashed.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Requirements

- Ensure that motor vehicles have brakes that will safely hold the maximum load on maximum grades.
See [WAC 296-307-07007\(1\)](#)
- Maintain all motor vehicles and their parts in good repair and safe condition.
See [WAC 296-307-07001\(1\)](#)
- Employees must report to their employer any motor vehicle or other farm equipment that is in unsafe operating condition. That vehicle or equipment must then be removed from service and repaired before use.
See [WAC 296-307-07001\(3\)](#)



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Recommendations

- Regularly check to ensure that all braking systems on trucks and trailers are operational. Do this on a scheduled basis, as part of the pre-trip vehicle walk-around safety inspection, and whenever the brakes don't feel "right."
- Don't wait until vehicle braking becomes critical. Remember, nothing is more important than your safety and that of family members and employees.



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Resources

Commercial Driver Guide. Washington State Dept. of Licensing.
www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/docs/cdlguide.pdf

Insuring that farm vehicles are road ready. Video produced by
Successful Farming Magazine.
www.agriculture.com/video/machinery-spotlight-transportation



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.