

Mechanic Crushed When Rollaway Semi-Truck Hits Trailer

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-213-2022s

REPORT DATE: January 6, 2022

INCIDENT DATE: September 25, 2020

WORKER: 47 years old

INDUSTRY: General automotive repair

OCCUPATION: Semi-trailer mechanic

SCENE: Outdoor trailer repair area

EVENT TYPE: Caught in or between



A 47-year-old trailer mechanic was killed when a rollaway semi-truck hit and caused a container trailer that he was welding to move and crush him against a large steel bumper jack.

The mechanic had worked for his employer for two months. The employer was a mobile commercial trailer repair contractor that operated at customer sites.

When the incident happened, the mechanic was working in an outdoor repair area of a customer's trailer leasing yard. He was welding a cross member at the rear end of a trailer chassis that was sitting on jack stands. Behind him were a large steel bumper jack and a loading dock.

A truck driver drove into the paved yard and parked his semi-truck directly behind and in-line with another truck that was in front of the trailer that the mechanic was welding. The driver then walked to the business office where the driver of the first truck was talking with the manager. The first driver soon left to drop off his trailer elsewhere in the yard. This opened up around 300 feet of space between the second truck and the trailer that the mechanic was welding.

While the manager and second driver were in the office, the driver's unattended truck rolled away and hit the trailer. The impact caused the trailer to fall off the jack stands and crush the mechanic behind it against the bumper jack. The mechanic was pronounced dead shortly after first responders arrived.

Investigators found:

- 1) The second truck had rolled away because it was left on a slight incline with its engine running, automatic transmission in neutral, and parking brake not set.
- 2) The first truck may have briefly kept the second one from rolling, but when it left, the second truck was allowed to roll forward, gain momentum, and accelerate to 5 miles per hour over the 300-foot distance toward the hit trailer.
- 3) The office manager stated that drivers routinely dropped off trailers without stopping their engines and sometimes not setting their brakes.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 1. Incident scene showing customer's paved trailer leasing yard. The unattended semi-truck rolled from the parking area on the left side of the photo to the repair area on right where it hit the trailer that crushed the mechanic.



Photo 2. View showing outdoor repair area and front of the trailer that was hit by the rollaway semi-truck. The impact pushed the trailer off its jack stands toward the mechanic working behind it, crushing him against a large steel bumper jack.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 3. View of loading dock and blue steel bumper jack behind the trailer that crushed the mechanic.



Photo 4. View of area where the trailer crushed the mechanic against the blue bumper jack.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 5. View of damage to the front of the trailer where it was hit by the rollaway semi-truck.



Photo 6. View of damage to rollaway semi-truck's fiberglass engine hood that resulted from hitting the trailer that crushed the mechanic.

Requirements

Employers must:

Make sure that before leaving any truck unattended, drivers first stop the engine, lock the ignition, remove the key, and effectively set the parking brake. If parked on any visible grade, drivers must turn the truck's front wheels to the curb or side of the road.

See: [RCW 46.61.600](#)

Requirements

Develop and implement a formal, written Accident Prevention Program (APP) with policies, job hazard solutions, and training to prevent rollaways in all work areas where trucks are parked.

See: [WAC 296-800-14005](#)

Recommendations

- Consider installing an electronic parking brake system designed to automatically apply the truck's parking brake when the driver has not set it before exiting the cab.
- Consider installing commercially available warning alarms designed to alert drivers that the truck's parking brake has not been set when they leave the driver's seat or open the cab door.

Resources

Use the [TIRES Safety Program Development Tool](#) to design a written company safety program or APP that includes policies, job hazard solutions, and training to prevent truck rollaway incidents. The tool is free and creates a customized APP that exceeds basic state requirements. For more information, read the tool overview on keeptruckingsafe.org.

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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