

Groundskeeper Crushed when UTV Tips Over

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-228-2022s

REPORT DATE: October 14, 2022

INCIDENT DATE: July 10, 2021

VICTIMS: 68 years old

INDUSTRY: Landscaping services

OCCUPATION: Groundskeeper/Caretaker

SCENE: Dirt access road to private residence

EVENT TYPE: Tip over/Roll over



A 68-year-old residential property groundskeeper/caretaker died when the Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) she was operating tipped over. The UTV had no seatbelt.

Her employer was the owner of a vacation home who employed her to take care of the home and property. She had been an employee for 14 years and resided on the property.

On the day of the incident, the groundskeeper and her adult daughter, who was also an employee, were trimming grass and shrubs along a dirt access road.

They loaded yard waste onto the dump bed of a UTV and brought it to a burn pile. The daughter then walked to another location.

The groundskeeper drove the UTV from where the burn pile was located, taking a right turn onto the access road.

As she drove the UTV downhill along the access road, the UTV swerved, and the front driver's side tire hit a tree root on the roadside embankment. This resulted in the UTV tipping over onto its passenger side.

The groundskeeper, unrestrained by a seatbelt, was ejected from her seat, pinned and crushed under the UTV's frame/rollover protective structure (ROPS). She died at the scene.

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The incident UTV's manufacturer provided lap-style seatbelts had been removed shortly after it had been purchased by the employer in 2007.
- The groundskeeper had been operating the UTV in order to carry out various tasks on the property without a seatbelt for 14 years.



Photo 1. Property access road along which the groundskeeper was operating the UTV. The UTV entered the road shown in the upper left of photo. The groundskeeper then drove it downhill along the road until it swerved and hit the tree root ball on the embankment (indicated by orange paint) and the UTV tipped over.



Photo 2. Incident scene showing UTV overturned on its passenger side. The unrestrained groundskeeper was ejected from her seat, pinned and crushed under the cab frame/rollover protective structure (ROPS).

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 3. Incident UTV with seatbelts removed.



Photos 4 and 5. Incident UTV from which lap-style seatbelts had been removed by employees. Photo on the left shows the bolt hole for the seatbelt for the driver's side. The photo on the right shows the seatbelt bolt hole for the passenger side.

Requirements

- Prohibit employees from using tools and equipment that are not safe. See [WAC 296-800-11030](#)
- Employers must develop a formal accident prevention program that is outlined in writing. See [WAC 296-800-14005\(1\)](#)

Recommendations

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar incidents:

- Do not remove or alter manufacturer provided safety features.
- Do a job hazard analysis (JHA) of tasks involving UTV vehicles as part of an APP. Workers should be involved in creating the JHA.
- Ensure that workers:
 - Always wear a seatbelt when operating or riding in a UTV.
 - Are trained and follow manufacturer guidelines for safe operation of equipment.

Resources

[Safe Operation of Utility Type Vehicles \(UTVs\)](#)

This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the injury.

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