

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:
71-207-2021

REPORT DATE:
August 27, 2021

INCIDENT DATE:
February 18, 2021

VICTIM:
47 years old

INDUSTRY:
General freight trucking

OCCUPATION:
Truck driver

SCENE:
Loading dock area of delivery site

EVENT TYPE:
Crushed by/struck by



The employer had provided straps so that drivers could secure loads in the trailers from falling out when they opened the trailer doors. Drivers did not commonly use them.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative is an alert about the tragic loss of life of a worker and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the fatality. Developed by the WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA 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# SU60OH008487). For more information visit www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face#wa-face.

Truck Driver Crushed by Cardboard Bale

SUMMARY

A 47-year-old truck driver was struck by a 1,500-pound bale of recycled cardboard when it fell on him after he opened the doors of a loaded semi-trailer.

He was an experienced driver who had worked for his employer, a truck transportation company, for ten years. He was actively involved in the company's safety program and in training new employees.

On the day of the incident, the driver was delivering a load of 1,500-pound bales of recycled cardboard to a paper production mill. The bales were loaded into his semi-trailer at his employer's yard where they had been stored. The bales were stacked three-high and were aligned with the center of the trailer. The trailer was fully loaded.

When the driver arrived near the loading dock at the delivery site, he first opened the trailer door on the passenger side and chained it to the side of the trailer to keep it open. He then opened the trailer door on the driver's side. As he opened the trailer door on the driver's side, a stack of bales became unstable and two of the bales fell out of the trailer. He was struck by a 1,500-pound bale that came to rest on him.

According to the coroner, the driver died of blunt force injuries of the torso.

Investigators found that the employer provided straps to prevent bales from tipping over and falling out when drivers opened the trailer doors, but the drivers did not use them. Additionally, the semi-trailer was parked on uneven ground, which may have destabilized the stack of bales.

REQUIREMENTS

- Employers must make sure all loads transported on trucks and trailers are properly secured and distributed. See [WAC 296-865-30020\(1\)](#)
- All Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV)s must comply with the requirements of 49 CFR 392.9 (Subpart A)- Inspection of cargo, cargo securement devices and systems, and 49 CFR 393 Subpart I – Protection Against Shifting and Falling Cargo.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences:

Employers should

- Ensure that drivers are protected from the hazard of falling bales.
- Ensure that when bales are loaded into trailers that they are properly secured and will not fall over during transport or when drivers open the trailer doors.
- Provide and require drivers to use cargo securement devices such as straps.
- Ensure that drivers park truck and trailer are on level ground before opening trailer doors.
- Ensure that drivers unlock and open one trailer door at a time and shield themselves from falling bales by standing behind the door.



Incident scene showing the two 1,500-pound bales of cardboard that fell from the trailer, one of which struck and crushed the driver.