

# Freight Clerk Crushed by Trailer at Store Loading Dock

## INCIDENT FACTS

**REPORT #:** 71-235-2023s

**REPORT DATE:** March 20, 2023

**INCIDENT DATE:** December 24, 2020

**WORKER:** 46 years old

**INDUSTRY:** Department Stores (Except Discount Department Stores)

**OCCUPATION:** Grocery / Freight Clerk

**SCENE:** Loading Dock

**EVENT TYPE:** Crush by Vehicle



A 46-year-old freight clerk died when he was crushed against a loading dock wall by a trailer. He worked for the employer, a large supermarket chain, for 10 years.

The semi-truck with the trailer arrived at the store at 12:30 am. After the trailer was backed up to the loading dock, a clerk went outside from the receiving area to talk with the truck driver. When the clerk returned, he opened the back of the trailer, checked the freight, and determined the truck was at the wrong dock. Just then a second clerk arrived to assist him. The clerks met briefly, and the first clerk went back outside to talk with the driver again.

Now alone, the second clerk closed the trailer. A few seconds later, he reopened it, looked in, then walked to the left side and leaned his head and shoulders through a gap between the exterior loading dock wall and rear of the trailer. He then came back in, closed the trailer a second time, and again leaned out the gap between the wall and trailer just as he had done before.

At the same time, the truck was preparing to pull forward. When its parking brake was released the trailer lurched back and crushed the clerk against the wall. After the truck pulled away, the first clerk returned to the dock, saw his injured co-worker on the pavement below, and called 911. The clerk died at the scene.

## Investigators found:

- The employer did not have loading dock safety policies, procedures, and training for workers.
- Workers routinely leaned out between loading dock walls and trailers to communicate with drivers.
- Trailer was parked away from dock bumpers and on a slight downgrade toward the loading bay.

# FATALITY NARRATIVE



**Photo 1.** Arrow shows loading dock wall where the clerk was crushed by the trailer.

# FATALITY NARRATIVE



**Photo 2.** Red arrow shows where clerk was crushed while leaning through a gap between the exterior wall and rear of the trailer. The gap resulted from the trailer being parked several inches away from the yellow-outlined 6-inch deep dock bumpers, possibly to make space to unfold the dock leveler lip. The green outlined dock bumpers at the loading bay on the right were larger.



# FATALITY NARRATIVE



**Photo 3.** Interior view of loading dock where incident occurred. The injured clerk fell to the driveway outside after being crushed by the trailer against the exterior wall.



**Photo 4.** X shows where clerk fell after being crushed by trailer against loading dock wall on right side of open bay door.

## Requirements

- Tailor the accident prevention program (APP) to the particular needs of the workplace or operation and to the types of hazards involved. [WAC 296-800-14005](#)
- Implement, supervise, and enforce safety and health training programs that are effective in practice. [WAC 296-800-14020\(1\)](#)

## Recommendations

- Construct or modify loading docks to have anti-crush safety zones by installing dock seals, barriers, and/or dock levelers designed to protect workers against vehicle crush hazards.
- Use traffic signal-style vehicle movement indicator lights at loading bays where the truck driver activates a red light to inform warehouse staff when it is safe to open bay doors, and warehouse staff activate a green light to inform the driver when the truck is ready to depart.

## Recommendations

- Require truck drivers to check in, leave keys, and wait in a designated safe place inside the shipping and receiving area where workers can talk with them away from hazards.
- Install signage at loading docks to warn workers and truck drivers about area hazards, such as pinch points.





Photo 5: Loading dock leveler design with 20-inch anti-crush zone. Photo courtesy of EXPRESSO France SAS.



Photo 6: Loading dock with bay door seal, warning signs, and traffic signal-style vehicle movement indicator lights. Photo courtesy of Freight Transport Association.

## **Resources**

[Fatal Facts: How to Prevent Loading and Unloading Incidents](#)

WA FACE program

*This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident 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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