

Worker's Legs Amputated in Subfloor Auger

On a September morning, a new worker at a dairy farm was in a feed bin using a pail to transfer feed into the bucket of a loader operated by her coworker. She had only been working for the employer for about a week, but had previous experience in the industry.

There was an auger in the floor of the bin that was not visible under the pile of feed. It was approximately twelve feet long and part of an automated feed mixing system operated from a separate control room.

The auger mixed material from other bins and was only in use for around two minutes each day. It was supposed to be guarded by several steel plates, but at some point the guards had shifted and no longer completely covered the auger.

As the worker was filling the loader, the auger began its cycle. Both of her legs were pulled into the rotating blade. Her coworker tried to pull her out, but was not able to. He could not find an emergency shut-off so he ran to the control room to shut down the auger and then to get help.

The injured worker was airlifted to a trauma center where she underwent lifesaving surgery. She suffered amputation of both legs, one below the knee and the other above.

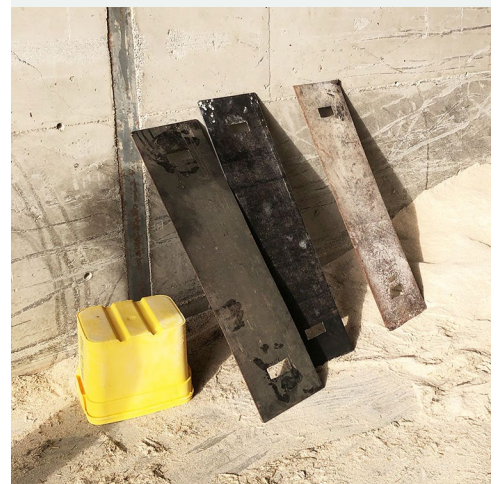
An inspection found that the corner of one of the steel plates guarding the auger was bent, suggesting that it had been struck by the loader and moved out of place before the incident occurred.

What do you think went wrong?

In the space below, list some of the factors that you think could have contributed to this incident. Then, flip the page over for contributing factors and safety recommendations and requirements.



Sub-floor auger that the worker was entangled in with guards removed after rescue effort.



Steel guards that had covered the auger, placed against the wall during rescue efforts, and yellow pail used to measure feed.

Reporting: Employers are required to contact DOSH within eight hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](#).

Contributing Factors

The auger was not properly guarded. The auger guards were not secured and had shifted, exposing the worker to the rotating auger. The workers were unaware of the hazard because the guards were not visible under the feed pile.

Lack of training. The employer did not provide adequate training about the locations of and hazards associated with augers. The new worker was unaware of the subfloor auger in the feed bin.

Lack of procedures. The employer did not have procedures for working safely around subfloor augers including checking for auger locations, checking that guards are secure and undamaged, and avoiding damaging auger guards with machinery.

No emergency shut-off. There was no emergency shut-off switch for the auger and the injured worker's coworker had to go to the system control room to disable the auger, prolonging her rescue.

Recommendations

Secure auger guards. Ensure that all guards are secured and fully covering augers, and perform periodic inspections to check for movement or damage.

Plan for Safety. Install signs to indicate areas with subfloor augers. Install an alarm or warning system to alert workers in the area before a subfloor auger is turning on.

Train new workers about subfloor auger hazards and safe work procedures, including where they are located on the worksite, how to recognize if guards are damaged or out of place, and how to avoid damaging them. Encourage workers to stop and tell a supervisor if they see unsafe conditions.

Install shut-off switches that are easily accessible near each area with a subfloor auger.

Requirements

- The employer must furnish to each employee a place of employment free from recognized controllable hazards likely to cause serious injury or death. See [WAC 296-307-045\(1\)](#)
- The employer must develop a formal accident prevention program that is outlined in writing. The program must be tailored to the needs of your particular workplace or operation and to the types of hazards involved. See [WAC 296-800-14005\(1\)](#)

Resources

- Chapter 296-307 WAC: Safety Standards for Agriculture— <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-307>
- Chapter 296-800 WAC: Safety and Health Core Rules — <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-800>
- L&I's Consultation Program offers confidential no-fee, professional advice and assistance to Washington businesses. To request an L&I Consultation go to: <https://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/preventing-injuries-illnesses/request-consultation/>

Safety Training Sign-In (Print Name Legibly) *Date:* _____

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