

Preventing Farm Worker Deaths During Hay Press Cleaning

Two farm workers died in separate incidents while cleaning hay presses. Neither followed lockout / tagout (LOTO) procedure requirements. A total of 433 farm workers in crop production died between 2013 and 2022, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. **Contact with equipment, including struck-by and caught-in incidents during machine maintenance and cleaning, were among the top causes of fatalities.** Using machine safeguards and following LOTO requirements and training can prevent fatalities and injuries.

OPERATOR STRUCK BY HAY PRESS GUILLOTINE

Industry: Farm Supplies Merchant Wholesalers **Task:** Cleaning hay press main compression chamber

A 39-year-old hay press operator was fatally struck by the machine's steel guillotine. He and two co-workers started clearing the machine's main press by pushing a few hay bales on a conveyor toward a covered intake area that housed a scale and baling and compression chamber. During normal operation, the conveyor moved hay onto a scale that activated a guillotine that sliced the hay. Although the conveyor was stopped, the machine was still energized when he crawled unseen into the covered area across the scale and started to push a bale. The weight of his body and the bale activated the guillotine, which fatally struck his head.

What led to this incident?

- **Practice:** The operator did not follow LOTO requirements and training before cleaning the hay press.
- **Policy:** The employer had a hazardous energy control program with LOTO requirements but did not effectively supervise, evaluate, and enforce it.



Hay intake area where worker entered and was struck by the guillotine.

SWEEPER CRUSHED IN HAY PRESS BALE ELEVATOR

Industry: Farm Supplies Merchant Wholesalers **Task:** Sweeping floor near hay press bale elevator

A 59-year-old floor sweeper died while sweeping the floor around a hay press. He walked through an opening under the press toward the finished bale elevator. The elevator was five feet above the floor when the sweeper walked under it. It slammed down and pinned his legs and torso between the elevator and output platform. Then, a 1,000-pound bale fell onto the elevator from the ejector above and crushed him facedown for 18 seconds before an automated pusher slid the bale out across his torso. Co-workers heard a scream and the press operator shut off the machine. First responders arrived shortly after but could not save him.

What led to this incident?

- **Practice:** The sweeper walked into an opening under the hay press that had no entrance prevention barrier.
- **Policy:** The employer trained workers not to enter the hay press when it was not locked out, but did not install a barrier at the opening because the sweeper would not be able to keep the area clean.



Pinch point between lowered bale elevator on right and output platform on left.

TIPS TO LIVE BY

- **Equip farm machines with the best safeguards.**
 - Inspect machine safety systems for injury prevention features that are broken, missing or need improvement.
 - Request an in-house consultation with the machine manufacturer to determine the best safeguards, including redesigning safety system features; installing additional guards, warning signs and emergency stops; retrofitting older machines with updated safety controls; modifying work procedures, selecting personal protective equipment (PPE); and receiving current operator safety manuals.
- **Develop specific LOTO procedures for each machine.**
 - Develop your written accident prevention program (APP) to include a hazardous energy control program with specific LOTO procedures for each machine. Include LOTO checklists to help ensure workers follow procedures correctly.
 - Assign distinctly marked or color-coded machine locks and keys to authorized workers, and require them to fill out tags with their name and signature; date, time, and contact information; and details about why the LOTO was done and how long it may be in place.
- **Provide, enforce, and enforce LOTO training.**
 - Train all workers who operate or work near machines to follow LOTO procedures according to the machine manufacturer's requirements, how to identify and report machine hazards, and how to react to dangerous practices and emergencies.
 - Refresher LOTO training should take place before machine cleaning and maintenance. Contact the machine manufacturer or dealer, a professional safety consultant, or local extension service program for help in developing a training plan.

SHARP Publication No. 47-33-2025

This alert is based on preliminary data and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incidents or the cause of injuries. Developed by the WA Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (WA 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 (# 5U60OH008487). For more information: www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/FACE.