

Operator Crushed between Backhoe Boom and Stabilizer

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-238-2023s

REPORT DATE: May 15, 2023

INCIDENT DATE: November 9, 2022

WORKERS: 54 years old

INDUSTRY: New Single-Family Housing
Construction

OCCUPATIONS: Equipment
operator/laborer

SCENE: Construction site

EVENT TYPE: Crushed against/pinned
between



FATALITY NARRATIVE



A 54-year-old operator died when the raised boom of a backhoe loader swung and crushed him against one of the machine's retracted stabilizers.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



On the day of the incident, the operator was working at a job site where new single-family homes were being built.

He had worked for his employer, a new housing construction contractor and subcontractor at the site, for two years.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



He first used the backhoe to excavate around an electrical junction box. After doing this, he used the backhoe's loader to place gravel around the box. He then moved the backhoe to the street where he parked it.

He left the engine running and the backhoe boom elevated. He exited the cab and walked to the rear of the backhoe.

No one saw what happened next, though investigators determined that as he was standing at the rear of the cab where the backhoe boom attached, he reached into the cab to retrieve a metal tool called a post pounder.

As he was doing this, he apparently dropped the post pounder on one of the two foot pedals that controlled the backhoe boom swing.

This caused the boom to swing sideways toward him, pinning and crushing him between the boom and one of the machine's two retracted stabilizers.



Photo 1. Backhoe loader at the incident scene



Photos 2 and 3. The pinch points located on each side of the rear of the backhoe. The operator was standing on the ground in the pinch point when he was crushed.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photos 4 and 5. The post pounder on the left and the boom swing foot pedal on the right (circled) that the post pounder landed on, causing the boom to swing.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



Photo 6. Foot pedals that control the backhoe boom swing.

Requirements

- Bulldozer and scraper blades, end-loader buckets, dump bodies, and similar equipment, must be either fully lowered or blocked when being repaired or not in use. All controls must be in a neutral position, with the motors stopped and the brakes set, unless work being performed required otherwise.

See [WAC 296-155-605\(1\)\(c\)\(i\)](#)

- You must not leave tools on the cab floor. You must not store spare cans of oil or fuel, and spare parts, in cabs, except in approved racks provided for that purpose.

See [WAC 296-155-77100\(3\)\(m\)](#)

Recommendations

FACE investigators concluded that to help prevent similar occurrences:

Instruct equipment operators and workers on foot to:

- Lower the boom to a safe position with the bucket on the ground and turn off the machine before stepping off for any reason.
- Never place tools, parts, or other objects in the cab that have the potential to activate the foot pedals or other controls.
- Never stand in the pinch point of the boom of a running or operating backhoe.

FATALITY NARRATIVE



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 injury.

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