



FATALITY NARRATIVE

Farm Tractor Operator Falls from Tractor and Run Over *

Industry: Dairy farm

Task: Operating tractor with hay rake attachment

Occupation: Tractor operator

Type of Incident: Tractor

Release Date: July 30, 2010

Incident Date: May 21, 2009

Case No.: 09WA02601

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On May 21, 2009, a tractor operator fell from a tractor while raking hay in a field and was run over by the tractor's wheel, the windrow rake being pulled by the tractor, or both. The 55-year-old victim was working his first day on the job as a temporary hay harvesting employee at a dairy farm. He was an experienced tractor operator. He started raking hay alone at 9am driving a tractor pulling a double windrow rake in a field of mown hay. He was found at 1pm deceased in the field near the tractor. The incident was unobserved. The medical examiner determined that the cause of death was suffocation probably as a result of falling from the tractor and being run over by the tractor wheel and/or the windrow rake.



Incident scene showing tractor with windrow hay rake

Requirements

- Every tractor should have a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and a seatbelt, there are some exemptions. See [WAC 296-307-08009](#) and [WAC 296-307-08012](#). Exemptions to ROPS can be found at [WAC 296-307-08015](#).
- Operators must always wear the tractor's seatbelt when operating a ROPS equipped tractor. See [WAC 296-307-08012](#).
- Operators must be familiar with the area where they will be operating the tractor. See [WAC 296-307-08018](#).

Recommendations

- Consider installing a "dead man" seat brake that operates when seat is vacated, similar to those used in forklifts and other industrial equipment.
- Do not get on, off, or lean from the operator's seat of a tractor in motion. Do not walk or run beside a tractor in motion.
- Operate the tractor from the operator's seat. Do not stand or sit on any other part of the tractor while it is in motion.
- Operators should always read the tractor's owner's manual and manufacturer's safety guidelines for the equipment.
- A seat belt will keep the operator within the safety zone of the ROPS in the case of a flip or roll-over. Even when operating within an enclosed cab, a seat belt will prevent being thrown out the door, window, or into the cab frame.
- When working in a new, unfamiliar, or less frequented area, the operator should stop and shut off the tractor and walk around and inspect the terrain for any potential problems before proceeding. The operator should note any debris or hazards and have a plan to deal with them.

State Wide Statistics: This was number 19 out of 64 work-related fatalities in Washington State during 2009, and was number 3 out of 9 agriculture-related fatalities.

**This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of a worker 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.*

Developed by Washington State [Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation \(FACE\)](#) 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 \(NIOSH\)](#). For more information, contact the [Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention \(SHARP\) Program](#), 1-888-667-4277.



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