

FATALITY NARRATIVE

Farm Laborer Dies When UTV Struck by Vehicle

Industry: Wheat Farms
Task: Using UTV to check flooded fields
Occupation: Farm laborer
Type of Incident: Struck by motor vehicle

Incident Date: April 24, 2017
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Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) after it was struck by a vehicle

In April 2016, a 35-year-old wheat farm laborer died when the Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) he was operating on a state highway was struck by a motor vehicle. On the day of the incident, the victim and another worker took their employer's UTV (also known as a side-by-side) to check for flooded farm fields. The six-wheel, three-seat UTV was equipped with a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and seatbelts. Neither the victim nor the passenger were wearing seatbelts or employer provided helmets. Although the UTV was unlicensed for on-road travel, the victim drove it onto the highway to gain access to a dirt road. The highway had a posted speed limit of 55 MPH. The UTV traveled along the highway's fog line at about 20 to 25 MPH for nearly a mile before slowing to make a left turn. The victim looked back over his shoulder to make sure that there were no approaching vehicles. The UTV was not equipped with a turn signal, though it did have a door-mounted review mirror. As he

began making the turn, a pickup truck approaching from the rear attempted to pass the UTV. The truck struck the UTV's left front corner. The impact caused the UTV to roll over and land on its passenger side, ejecting both occupants. The victim landed in the road and the passenger in a ditch. Medics arrived and took them to a hospital. The victim died of head injuries three days later; the passenger had minor injuries. The UTV manufacturer operator's manual stated that the operator and passengers should wear a helmet and use a seatbelt. It further stated that users should not operate the UTV on public or paved roads. Investigators found that the employer had provided helmets and instructed employees to use them, told them to follow UTV manufacturer's safety instructions, and had provided a trailer to haul the UTV to farm locations to avoid travel on public roads.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)

Requirements

- Employers must provide personal protective equipment to employees.
See [WAC 296-307-10005](#)
- Ensure that employees use personal protective equipment, such as in this case a helmet and seat belts, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
See [WAC 296-307-10015\(1\)](#)

Recommendations

- Manufacturers have designed and equipped UTVs and ATVs for off road use. Employers should follow the manufacturer's safety guidelines and not let their employees drive these vehicles on public paved roads.
- As part of their accident prevention program, employers should do a job hazard analysis (JHA) of tasks involving farm equipment that may pose risks. Employees should be involved in creating the JHA. In this case, the employer and employees could have come up with a safer way to check the fields.
www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AToZ/JHA
- **Always** wear a DOT-compliant helmet and seatbelt when operating a UTV.

This narrative 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.

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