



# HAZARD ALERT



## Hazards to Orchard Tractor and Machinery Operators\*

**Occupation:** Farmer / Orchard worker/ Tractor operator  
**Task:** Operating or maintaining tractor or farm equipment  
**Type of Incident:** Roll over / Run over / Struck by

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### Fatal Incidents

- On July 7, 2012, an orchard worker was operating a three-wheeled forklift. After delivering a load of fruit bins, the forklift went off the steep edge of the orchard road, causing it to tip-over, crushing the operator.
- On July 4, 2012, an orchard worker was changing a tire on a sprayer attached to a tractor when the tractor, which was running, moved forward and the sprayer wheels ran over him.
- On June 26, 2012, an orchard owner was operating a tractor in a cherry orchard when he was pinned between a large tree limb and the tractor.

### Recommendations for Preventing Similar Incidents

- When working in a new, unfamiliar, or less frequented area, machinery operators should:
  - stop the machine and shut off the engine before proceeding
  - walk around and inspect the path for any potential hazards like steep road edges or tree branches
  - note any debris or hazards and make a plan to deal with them
- Shut down machinery completely: turn off the engine, remove key, set brakes, set gears to “park”, and wait for moving parts to stop before getting off or attempting to do maintenance.
- Read the machinery’s owner’s manual and manufacturer’s safety guidelines before operating.
- Wear a seat belt to 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.
- Train operators to notice and **avoid**:
  - operating on steep slopes
  - excessive speed when turning
  - improper hitching of towed equipment
  - ditches, embankments, and holes
  - hitching tow chains or straps too high
  - other conditions that may cause tractors to overturn

### Requirements

- Tractors operated by employees must have a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS), 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 a 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.

### Resources

Washington State Division of Occupational Safety and Health tractor safety resources:

- Tractor Safety page: [www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/topic.asp?KWID=501](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/topic.asp?KWID=501)
- Tractor Safety: Rollover protection-English link [www.lni.wa.gov/FormPub/Detail.asp?DocID=2540](http://www.lni.wa.gov/FormPub/Detail.asp?DocID=2540)
- Tractor Safety: Rollover protection-Spanish link [www.lni.wa.gov/FormPub/Detail.asp?DocID=2549](http://www.lni.wa.gov/FormPub/Detail.asp?DocID=2549)

National Agricultural Tractor Safety Initiative: <http://depts.washington.edu/trsafety/resources.php>

Preventing Death and Injuries in Tractor Overturns (CDC/NIOSH): <http://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2009/01/rops/>

*\*This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a tragic loss of life of workers 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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SHARP-Research for Safe Work

