Heavy Equipment Operator Run Over by Compactor Roller

INCIDENT FACTS
REPORT #: 71-173-2018s
REPORT DATE: July 3, 2018
INCIDENT DATE: June 26, 2017
VICTIM: 73 years old
INDUSTRY: Site preparation contractors
OCCUPATION: Heavy equipment operator
SCENE: New home construction job site
EVENT TYPE: Fall/Struck by
A 73-year-old heavy equipment operator died when he fell from the compact roller he was operating and was run over by it.

He was employed by a site preparation contractor for whom he had worked three months out of the year for the past 17 years. On the day of the incident, he was working at new home development job site. He and a coworker were working together filling housing lots with soil. The coworker operated a dump truck to deliver soil. The victim operated a bulldozer to spread the soil and then used a compactor roller to compact it.
Around three p.m., the dump truck driver left the site to retrieve another load of soil. When he returned he did not see the compactor roller. Then he noticed the victim lying motionless on the ground in the area where he had been using the roller. He contacted his supervisor and then called 911.

The medical examiner determined that the victim had been run over by the roller and had died of blunt force injuries of the head and torso.
State workplace safety investigators found that he fell from the open cab of the roller as it moved in reverse.

The roller was found several hundred yards away resting against a tree. No one saw what happened. Investigators could not determine what caused him to fall, or whether he had been seated or standing prior to his fall.

He possibly stood up to get a better view of the edge of the excavation on his right as he was backing. Evidence at the scene indicates that the side of the roller came in contact with the excavation wall, which may have jolted the roller and caused him to fall. The roller’s seat belt was found to be functional, unclipped, and retracted.

The employer required employees to wear seat belts and coworkers told investigators that the victim was known to always wear his seat belt.
Photo 1  Incident scene at a new home development job site. The “X” shows where the operator was found after he fell from the reversing compactor roller and was run over by it. The arrow shows the direction the roller was moving. After striking the operator, the roller continued moving until it came to rest against a tree in the woods.
Photo 2  Incident compactor roller.
**Photo 3** Job site where the victim and a coworker were working to fill housing lots with dirt. The coworker operated a dump truck to bring in dirt. The victim then used a dozer to spread the dirt and a roller to compact it.
Side of the excavation wall that the compactor roller struck, which may have caused a jolt sufficient to cause the victim to fall off the roller.
Requirements

Seat belts must be provided by employers and used by construction heavy equipment operators.

See [WAC 296-155-615 (1)(b)](#)
Recommendations

• Always use the provided seat belt when operating heavy equipment. Uneven terrain or unexpected movements may cause an operator to be ejected off the equipment.

• Consider purchasing or equipping compactor rollers and other heavy mobile construction equipment with a safety interlock device such as an Operator Presence Sensing System (OPSS) that prevents movement of the equipment when the operator is not seated at the controls.
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.

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