

**INCIDENT FACTS**

**REPORT #:**

71-187-2019

**REPORT DATE:**

October 30, 2019

**INCIDENT DATE:**

September 25, 2018

**VICTIM:**

55 years old

**INDUSTRY:**

Grape vineyards

**OCCUPATION:**

Vineyard laborer

**SCENE:**

Grape vineyard

**EVENT TYPE:**

Fall from equipment



Chair (indicated by circle) from which the laborer fell.

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



This narrative is an alert about the injury of a worker and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the injury. Developed by WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program 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 grant# 5U60OH008487). For more information visit [www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face](http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face).

## Vineyard Laborer Falls from Grape Harvester

**SUMMARY**

A 55-year-old vineyard laborer was injured when he fell seven feet from a grape harvester.

The incident happened during harvest of wine grapes at the employer's vineyard.

The mechanical harvester was designed to be pulled by a tractor as it moves through vineyard rows. It beats the vines with rubber sticks, causing the grapes to drop onto a conveyor belt that brings them to a holding bin.

The employer modified this harvester by attaching a chair to the harvester's conveyor. The laborer had sat in this chair for five seasons to pick out and discard material other than grapes (known as MOG), such as vines and leaves as the harvester moved through the vineyard rows.

The manufacturer did not approve this modification. The harvester operator's manual cautions that no one should ride on the harvester while it is moving, as this may result in serious injury or death.

Just before the incident, the laborer and the harvester operator had returned from a break. The operator started up the tractor to pull the harvester after he saw the laborer get into the chair. As the operator turned away, the laborer stood up from the chair to adjust his rain gear. When the harvester began to go forward, the laborer who was still standing fell backwards off the chair's platform. He landed seven feet below on the ground. His fall resulted in severe bruising of his chest, neck, and back, as well as shoulder sprains.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- The manufacturer's instruction manual, if published by the manufacturer and currently available, must be the source of information for the safe operation and maintenance of field equipment. See [WAC 296-307-076\(2\)](#)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences:

- Employers should not modify, install, or retrofit components of equipment without consulting the manufacturer.



Chair installed by employer from which the laborer fell.