

Hay Press Operator Struck by Machine's Guillotine Blade

SUMMARY

On February 9, 2018, a 39-year-old hay press operator died when he was struck by the machine's steel guillotine blade. The operator was performing his usual job duties at a plant that processed field baled hay into high-density bales for shipping.

Near the end of his shift, the plant supervisor asked him and two other employees to get the machine ready for maintenance. They started cleaning up by placing a few bales onto the conveyor, which had been stopped, and pushing them along toward the scale. The operator was responsible for locking out the equipment, but he did not do this.

During normal operation, a conveyor moved hay into the covered area of the scale. When the hay reached the correct weight, a guillotine blade would slice the hay before it was moved along by conveyor to be compressed. The operator crawled into the covered area where the scale was located and started to push a bale through to clear the area. His supervisor and coworkers did not notice him get into the machine. As he was lying on the scale, the steel guillotine blade activated and struck him, resulting in near decapitation.



Scene where the operator crawled onto the scale pan that triggered the guillotine.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Lockout/tagout (LOTO) procedures not followed.
- LOTO training not provided to all employees working on or near energized equipment.
- Recurring employee deviation from LOTO procedures not reported.
- Hazardous energy control program evaluations not conducted by management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation investigators concluded that to protect employees from similar hazards employers should:

- Enforce and evaluate employee compliance with machine manufacturer's LOTO requirements when servicing or maintaining machines and equipment.
- Provide and enforce LOTO training that emphasizes the severity of the hazard of entering energized machines that have LOTO requirements.
- Implement, enforce, and evaluate a hazard reporting and response system that can document employee deviations from LOTO requirements and initiate corrective actions when they reoccur.
- Perform risk assessments with the machine manufacturer to understand or customize safety control system features, such as emergency stop (E-Stop) locations and access doors.

SHARP Publication # 52-49-2021_summary. The full version of this report, along with the detailed recommendations and discussions section, can be found at:

www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/files/2021/52_49_2021_HayPressOperatorStruck.pdf

The Washington State Fatality Assessment and Control (WA FACE) program is one of many workplace health and safety programs administered by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries' Safety & Health & Research for Prevention (SHARP) program. It is a research program designed to identify and study fatal occupational injuries. Under a cooperative agreement with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH grant# 2U60OH008487), WA FACE collects information on occupational fatalities in WA State and targets specific types of fatalities for evaluation.

More about WA FACE can be found at: www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face