

Case 470. 45-year-old farm laborer died when he was run over by a Dutz 3006 farm tractor and trailer.

A 45-year-old male farm laborer died when he was run over by a Dutz 3006 farm tractor and trailer. The decedent was driving a Dutz 3006 low profile orchard tractor pulling a 16-foot long, 6-foot wide single axle trailer with fruit lugs and ladders on the two-track drive behind the packing barn to the orchard. The two-track ran downhill south to north with a slight grade. On the west side of the drive were tall weeds and brush. The east side of the two-track was grass. The trailer was a single axle flatbed trailer with a steel frame and wood surface. The farmer had met with the decedent and two other farm hands at approximately 8am and gave them their work assignments to pick plums in designated orchards. Two farm hands left in a vehicle and drove to the orchard and the decedent was to bring the tractor and trailer with the lugs and ladders to them. His two coworkers waited about 15 minutes, and when he did not arrive, drove back to the packing barn to look for him. One of the coworkers saw the tractor, which was still running and in neutral positioned at an angle in the tall grass on the west side the two-track drive; the trailer was positioned on the two-track. The coworker looked and called for the decedent. Not seeing him or hearing a response, the coworker got on the tractor and moved it backward onto the farm road. The coworker felt the rear tire of the tractor rise and then the decedent's body came into view. Emergency response and the owner was summoned. The decedent was pronounced dead at the scene. When the owner arrived at the scene, he found a ladder on the trailer tongue. A possible scenario for the incident was that the decedent may have stopped the tractor to put the ladder back on the trailer. Leaving the tractor in neutral, the downhill grade of the two-track combined with the tractor running and in neutral, and the weight of the trailer may have caused the tractor and trailer to roll and run him over.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Other-than-Serious violations to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation.

OTHER-THAN-SERIOUS: RECORDING AND REPORTING OF OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES, ADM PART 11, RULE 408.22139(1): Fatalities. Within 8 hours after the death of any employee from a work-related incident, you must report the fatality by telephone to the MIOSHA toll-free central telephone number: 1-800-858-0397.

A fatality was not reported to MIOSHA for approximately four (4) months after the employer was notified.