

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:

22MI096

REPORT DATE:

June 4, 2025

INCIDENT DATE:

September 7, 2022

WORKER:

30-year-old

INDUSTRY:

Crop Harvesting,
Primarily by Machine

OCCUPATION:

Field Worker

EVENT TYPE:

Fall



The containers loaded onto the trailer prior to the incident.



Roadway condition at incident site.

Field Worker Dies after Falling from Trailer

SUMMARY

A male 30-year-old Field Worker died from multiple blunt force injuries after falling off the back of a tractor-towed trailer and landing on a paved roadway. Seven employees, all field workers, were involved in this incident. The field owner contracted with a harvesting company to provide workers to harvest produce. The main job for the field workers that day was harvesting zucchini and depositing it into 20-bushel bungs, or large bins.

The field owner owned both the Ford Utility Model #5640 tractor, and the trailer. The trailer was a 4-inch by 4-inch steel frame only (no platform) with two wheels. Both tractor and trailer were equipped with brake lights but neither had slow moving vehicle signage. The load-bearing portion of the trailer was approximately 25 feet wide and 4 feet long. Each bung was 48-inches-long by 39-inches-wide by 30.75-inches-tall and weighed approximately 90 pounds when empty and 900 pounds when full. The field workers had loaded the trailer with seven full bungs of zucchini and were transporting the bungs from one area of the field to another for loading onto a truck. The bungs were not secured to the trailer frame. The load likely weighed 6000+ pounds.

One field worker drove the tractor from the field access path onto a public roadway. His six coworkers were riding on the trailer frame. The tractor driver stated that he turned the tractor to avoid clipping a roadside mailbox with the trailer, and then quickly swerved back into the travel lane to get out of the way of an oncoming car. At this point, the tractor hit a dip in the road, causing the unsecured load on the trailer to shift and two field workers to fall off the trailer. A field worker positioned on the curbside was ejected from the trailer along with a bung; both fell clear. The decedent, who was standing street-side fell forward onto the roadway, striking his head and was then run over by a trailer tire. Due to a language barrier, the individuals at the scene contacted the field owner first, rather than calling 911 directly. The field owner called 911. It is unknown the time frame between the incident occurring and the time when 911 was notified. EMS was dispatched. Due to a delayed response time from EMS, the decedent's coworkers decided to self-transport to the hospital. He was declared dead in the hospital emergency room.

In interviews with MIOSHA, both field owner and the harvesting company manager stated they had not previously observed field workers riding on the trailer. The harvesting company manager stated that he directly supervised the workers for 30 minutes to 1 hour per day; no managers were present in the field at the time of the incident. The company did not have a work rule against employees riding on the trailer and did not directly train employees against riding on the trailer. Multiple employees stated that they had not previously ridden on the trailer, and they don't know why they decided to do so on the day of the incident.



The tractor, trailer, and containers involved in the incident, minus the container that fell from the trailer during the incident.

REQUIREMENTS

Employers must:

- Ensure at initial assignment and at least annually thereafter that every employee is instructed in the safe operation and servicing of all covered equipment with which he is or will be involved, including the prohibition of riders on farm field equipment other than persons required for instruction or assistance in machine operation. See [Part 53, R408.45301 Farm Field Equipment](#)
- Ensure that each tractor operator is informed of the operating practices of Appendix A in Agricultural Operations Standards Part 51. Agricultural Tractors and other practices dictated by the work environment. See [Part 51, R408.45101 Agricultural Tractors](#)
- Ensure slow moving vehicle (SMV) signs are attached when appropriate. See [Part 55, Agricultural Operations](#) citing [1910.145 Specifications for accident prevention signs and tags](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

MIFACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Develop, implement, and evaluate a formal safety training program for field workers that specifies safety rules in addition to employer requirements that employees are expected to follow. One safety rule should include not riding on equipment unless they are the person operating the equipment or if there is a designated passenger seat.
- Ensure loads placed onto trailers are secured.
- Ensure implements of husbandry (which includes tractors and trailers) with a maximum speed potential of 25 miles per hour operated on public roadways comply with safety regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, tractor and trailer lighting and slow-moving vehicle (SMV) signs.

CITATIONS

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following serious and other-than-serious citations at the conclusion of its investigation.

- **Serious: 1928.57(a)(6): AG PART 53, FARM FIELD EQUIPMENT [REF 408.45301]**
At the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter, the employer shall instruct every employee in the safe operation and servicing of all covered equipment with which he is or will be involved, including at least the following safe operating practices:
 - (i) Keep all guards in place when the machine is in operation;
 - (ii) *Permit no riders on farm field equipment other than persons required for instruction or assistance in machine operation;*
 - (iii) Stop engine, disconnect the power source, and wait for all machine movement to stop before servicing, adjusting, cleaning or unclogging the equipment, except where the machine must be running to be properly serviced or maintained, in which case the employer shall instruct employees as to all steps and procedures which are necessary to safely service or maintain the equipment;
 - (iv) Make sure everyone is clear of machinery before starting the engine, engaging power or operating the machine;
 - (v) Lock out electrical power before performing maintenance or service on farmstead equipment.