

Case 479. 20-year-old heavy equipment operator died when an upright wing of trail grooming equipment fell and struck him after he removed a pin on a safety chain holding the wing in an upright position.

A 20-year-old male heavy equipment operator died when an upright wing of snow grooming equipment fell and struck him after he removed a pin on a safety chain holding the wing in an upright position. The snow groomer was approximately 20 feet in length and 8 feet in width and the two wings were each approximately 12 feet long and 3 feet wide. Each wing weighed approximately 2,000 pounds and were operated via hydraulic cylinders, which were fixed via hydraulic hoses to a John Deere 7430 tractor. A metal chain on both sides of the groomer were attached from the groomer wing to the base of the groomer to lock the wing in place during transport. The hydraulic cylinder on the wing involved in the incident was being replaced while the groomer was in a maintenance garage. The decedent and his coworker, both volunteer workers, finished replacing the cylinder. The coworker saw the decedent remove the safety chain from the wing as he was walking to the tractor to start it so they could remove the tractor and groomer from the garage. When the decedent removed the safety chain, the wing dropped onto his chest and pinned him against the garage wall. The coworker started the tractor, engaged the hydraulic cylinders, and lifted the wing from the decedent. He then called for emergency response and began CPR.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health division determined the fatality to be non-program related because an employer-employee relationship was not established. MIOSHA personnel shared with the association the safety and health regulations that would be applicable if the inspection had been program-related.