

Case 43. 35-year-old owner of a residential landscaping company died when a suspended 1000-pound Bobcat hydraulic riding-type lawn mower fell on him during machine maintenance.

On Thursday, August 28, 2003, a 35-year-old owner of a residential landscaping company was found dead from asphyxiation under a 1000-pound Bobcat hydraulic riding type lawn mower. He was found in a pole barn on his property where he stored and repaired equipment. The floor of the barn was concrete and the lighting was good. The mower was the type with the mower deck in front and the motor in back of the driver's seat. The end of the chain from a half-ton overhead hoist was found dangling on the floor toward the rear of the mower. It was suggested by relatives that the chain had been attached to itself with a swivel hook placed around a chain link, not attached through a link in the chain. No blocks or jacks were found nearby to support the suspended vehicle. The exact circumstances are unknown. A likely scenario is that the victim had suspended the mower on its front wheels to remove the mower blade drive belt. He may have wrapped the hoisting chain around the motor support frame at the back of the mower. It is possible that some motion, perhaps due to the force of his exertion to remove the drive belt under the mower, caused the chain swivel hook to release the link and subsequently the frame from the back of the mower allowing it to fall onto his chest which resulted in his asphyxiation.

MIOSHA issued the following "Serious" citations:

1. The employer failed to report the death to the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services, Bureau of Safety and Regulation within 8 hours. (Recording and Reporting of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, Part OSH 11, Rule 1139(1))
2. No secondary support means capable of supporting the total imposed weight of the Bobcat lawn tractor was used to protect the employee in case of failure of the supporting system. (General Provisions, Part 1, Rule 34(12))