

Case 63. 25-year-old male mechanic died when pinned between a van and semi-truck's cab when unloading the van from the semi-truck's trailer.

On March 4, 2004, a 25-year-old male mechanic died when pinned between a van and semi-truck's cab when unloading the van from the semi-truck's trailer. The mechanic had taken the semi-tractor/trailer hauling three vehicles to an auction site for the vehicles to be sold. He was assisted by employees of the auction site to remove the vehicles. The first vehicle was removed without incident. The second vehicle, a "cherry picker" utility truck, was unloaded and parked next to the driver side door of the semi-tractor. He left the cherry picker running. The remaining vehicle on the semi-trailer was a van whose wheelbase was too long; therefore the rear tires would not fit completely on the elevated flat area of the trailer. The victim attached a tow chain from the back of the cherry picker to the van's front undercarriage to keep the van from rolling backwards off the trailer while he removed the van's tie downs. The victim was on the passenger side of the trailer removing the van's tie downs when an auction employee, wanting to move the cherry picker to another location, walked over to the cherry picker and asked the victim, "Are we all set with this one?" The victim replied "Yes, " but it appears his response was in reference to the tie down being removed, not that the cherry picker could be moved to another location. The auction employee got into the cherry picker, put it into drive, and moved forward. After traveling forward approximately two feet, he felt the vehicle "jerk" from behind. He stopped, and backed up slightly. Putting the cherry picker into park, the auction employee got out of the truck and saw that the van was pulled forward off the semi-trailer and that the front wheels were off of the trailer. The victim was pinned between the van and semi-tractor's cab. The auction employees tried to pull the van back onto the trailer using another vehicle to free the victim but were unsuccessful. Emergency personnel arrived and took the victim to a local hospital where he was declared dead.

MIOSHA did not issue any citations to the employer.