

Case 270. 62-year-old logging company owner died when he was run over by the John Deere 648GIII log skidder he was operating to level branches and wood chip piles.

62-year-old male logging company owner died when he was run over by the John Deere 648GIII log skidder he was operating to level branches and wood chip piles. The decedent went to the logging site to check on the equipment, and to level out the brush and chip piles left by the logging activity. The decedent, according to interview statements, was very meticulous about equipment maintenance. A possible scenario was developed. The decedent checked the transmission oil before he turned on the skidder per the equipment manual instruction. The decedent entered the cab and turned on the equipment and began to work. At some point, he noticed that he had not fully inserted the transmission dip stick. The transmission dip stick was located on the right side of the skidder between the front and rear tires under the operator's cab. Placing the skidder in neutral, he exited the cab and accidentally activated the gear shift placing the machine in reverse. The decedent was run over and the skidder continued in reverse approximately 270 feet until it was stopped by a tree. The individual who found the decedent heard the machine running and went to investigate. He found the decedent lying on the ground on a leveled out wood chip pile. He then walked to the skidder and turned it off. Responding police found the access door to the transmission dip stick on the skidder open and the stick pulled out approx 18 inches. The shift lever does not lock in neutral but it does take a double action to get the shift out of park. Park and neutral are located next to each other and it will go into park without a double action.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue the company any citations at the conclusion of its investigation.