

Case 420. 54-year-old farmer died when unsecured wooden crates fell from the forks of a forklift attachment to the front of a Massey Ferguson 360 farm tractor and struck him.

A 54-year-old male farmer died when unsecured wooden crates fell from the forks of a forklift attachment to the front of a Massey Ferguson 360-2-WD farm tractor and struck him. The Massey Ferguson had been converted to a forklift by attaching forklift components to the front of the tractor. The serial plate indicated a height of 108 inches and a capacity of 2500 pounds @ 24-inch load center. The tractor, since it was used in orchard operations, was a low profile tractor and did not have a roll over protection device. The tractor was used to lift and move wooden crates to locations around the fields where pickers would fill bags with product and then deposit the bags in the crate and back to a staging area, where the crates would be trucked to a processing facility. The decedent was preparing to move a stack of empty crates to the field. The crates measured 4-feet by 3-feet by 27 inches deep to bottom fill area and 32 inches on the outside to include the frame and fork enclosures. A crate unit was constructed by placing one crate, placed upright on the ground, one crate placed on its side inside the upright crate and a third crate flipped over and placed over the other two crates. Each 3-crate unit weighed 480 pounds. Three of these crate units comprised a stack, which measured 15 feet 3 inches tall. At the time of the incident, the decedent was backing a stack away from the crate storage area when the top 3-crate unit and one additional crate fell on top of the tractor he was operating. The decedent and tractor continued in reverse until the tractor struck a truck located approximately 30 feet away. A witness ran over to the decedent, who had pushed the bins off of himself, turned off the tractor, and called for emergency response. Near the area where the decedent was working was a small curb in the parking lot. Responding police observed tractor tire impressions that appeared to have backed out, away from the crate storage area and partially up onto a 10-inch curb and then back onto the flat area of the parking lot.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue any citations – the decedent was the sole proprietor.