

FACE Investigation 90C0062

SUBJECT: A 79 year-old Colorado Farmer Dies After Falling Five Feet from a Haystack.

SUMMARY:

A 79 year-old farmer died from injuries sustained in a five-foot fall while attempting to move bales of hay. The victim had climbed a ladder next to a twelve-foot-high stack of hay bales. The victim threw one bale to the ground, and then is thought to have stepped onto a bale that was protruding from the stack at the five-foot level. The victim fell from this bale to the ground. The victim showed no signs of life when found by his son. The Colorado Department of Health investigator concluded that, in order to prevent future similar occurrences, employers should:

- * survey the work-site to identify hazards;
- * inform all employees of the possible hazards;
- * consider and address worker safety in the planning phase of projects.

INTRODUCTION:

On December 11, 1990 a 79 year-old self-employed farmer died of injuries sustained when he fell five feet from a stack of hay bales.

A routine screening of state death certificates by the Colorado Department of Health (CDH) for work related fatalities prompted the investigation of this fatal injury. Family members were contacted and reports were obtained from the local sheriffs department and the county coroner.

The victim in this incident is an independent farm owner/operator who had been farming for over fifty years. The farm is family-owned and does not employ any additional personnel.

INVESTIGATION:

The victim had climbed a ladder next to a twelve-foot-high stack of hay bales to get bales for feeding cattle in an adjacent corral. After throwing one bale to the ground, the victim apparently stepped onto a bale that was extending from the side of the stack approximately five feet from the ground. This bale showed damage on one corner, indicating that the bale had crumbled under his weight. The victim had no signs of life when found by his son.

CAUSE OF DEATH:

The cause of death was determined at autopsy to be a fractured cervical column.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: On a regular basis employers should conduct a job site survey to identify potential hazards, implement appropriate control measures, and provide subsequent training to employees that specifically addresses all identified site hazards.

Recommendation #2: Employers should address worker safety in the planning phase of all projects.

Discussion: Worker safety issues should be discussed and incorporated into all projects during the planning and throughout the entire project. The planning for and incorporation of safety measures prior to any work being performed at job sites will help to identify potential worker hazards so that preventive measures can be implemented at the site.

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