

June 24, 1998

Nebraska FACE Investigation 98010

SUBJECT:

Security Guard Run Over by Own Truck

SUMMARY:

A 55-year-old security officer was killed when he was apparently run over by the pickup truck he had been driving. He was patrolling a municipal power maintenance facility when the incident occurred. He apparently backed into a trailer and damaged the driver side door of the pickup and then drove the truck approximately 50-60 feet away from the trailer. He apparently got out of the truck and was walking back to the trailer to check for damage when the truck rolled backwards, knocking him to the ground. An employee who was driving by the facility noticed the truck and checked out the incident. He checked the victim and found no pulse or other signs of life. He called 911 who immediately responded.

The Nebraska Department of Labor investigator concluded that to prevent future similar occurrences employers and employees should:

- * Insure vehicle transmission is securely in "park" before exiting the vehicle.
- * Insure the vehicle emergency brake is set if the vehicle is left running and unattended.
- * Consider requiring vehicle engines to be shut off before exiting vehicles.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

The goal of the Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) workplace investigation is to prevent work-related deaths or injuries in the future by a study of the working environment, the worker, the task the worker was performing, the tools the worker was using, and the role of management in controlling how these factors interact.

This report is generated and distributed **solely** for the purpose of providing current, relevant education to employers, their employees and the community on methods to prevent occupational fatalities and injuries.

INTRODUCTION:

On April 30, 1998 at approximately 9:11 p.m., a 55-year-old security officer was killed when he was run over by his truck. The Nebraska Department of Labor was notified of the fatality by OSHA on May 4, 1998. The Nebraska FACE Investigator conducted site visits on May 5, 1998 and May 8, 1998. An interview was also conducted with the victim's employer on May 8, 1998. The incident occurred at a public power operations center but the victim was an employee of a security company that provides security services for the public power company.

The victim had been employed by the security company for five years and had worked security at the operations center for nine years (the first four years he was employed by a different security company). The security company has been in business for 15 years and employs approximately 500 people in various locations. The victim and one other individual were the only security personnel from this company employed at the operations center. This was the second fatality in the history of the company and the previous fatality occurred 10 years ago. The company has a written safety program.

INVESTIGATION:

On the evening of the incident, the victim was doing his security rounds of the complex. He was driving a pickup truck around the operations center. He would stop at different buildings at the facility and get out of the truck to check the security of each building. The evening of the incident an off-duty employee was driving by the operations center and noticed the security pickup truck at an odd angle with its door open. He entered the complex to investigate and discovered the victim trapped under the pickup. His feet were sticking out from the front of the pickup and the right front tire was resting against his head. He turned off the vehicle, which was still running, and called the power company dispatcher who called 911. He then checked for a pulse but found none.

There were no witnesses to the incident, but from the physical evidence, the following scenario is probable. The driver side door of the pickup was buckled, apparently from backing into something. A steel trailer, with several 55-gallon drums of oil on it, was in the area where the victim and truck were found. Damage to the door of the pickup, scrape marks on the trailer and a broken tail light on the trailer matched up. Apparently the victim was backing up with the driver side door open and impacted the trailer, causing the damage. (See figure 1 for a drawing of the incident scene.)

After striking the trailer, he apparently pulled the pickup forward approximately 50-60 feet and got out to walk back and check the damage to the trailer. The travel of the pickup indicated the wheels had been turned to the right, the vehicle had been left running and apparently the transmission was in reverse. The victim was most likely behind the left rear of the pickup and was knocked down by the pickup moving in reverse. His radio and badge were found on the ground east of a large pool of blood. The radio was scratched on the right side, indicative of striking the concrete. According to a coworker, the victim generally wore his radio on his right side. The victim sustained severe head injuries from striking the concrete, resulting in heavy blood loss. It appears the victim was on the ground long enough for a pool of blood approximately 18" in diameter to form. From the evidence it appears the victim was knocked down and then the left rear tire rolled over him. Due to the amount of blood pooled where he was initially knocked down, the left rear tire may have been pushing against him for some time before it ran over him. After the tire ran over him, it appeared he was drug underneath the truck for approximately 15 to 20 feet. There was a blood smear from the pool of blood to where the victim came to rest. Also the vehicle's left rear tire rolled through the blood and left a "footprint" every revolution of the tire. This "footprint" and the blood smear indicated the direction the vehicle was rolling. The truck finally stopped with the right front tire pressing against the victim's head. His feet were protruding from underneath the front of the pickup. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

CAUSE OF DEATH:

The cause of death, according to the Coroner's Report was severe blunt force trauma of the head, trunk, and extremities.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Insure vehicle transmission is securely in “park” before exiting the vehicle.

Discussion: It appears in this incident the transmission was not fully in “park.” Had it been, the vehicle would not have traveled backwards. Operators must insure by feel (the gearshift “locking” into “park”) and by sight (transmission indicator showing vehicle is in “park”) that the vehicle is securely in “park.”

Recommendation #2: Insure the vehicle emergency brake is set if the vehicle is left running and unattended.

Discussion: As an added safety measure, if a vehicle is left running, besides placing the vehicle in “park,” the emergency brake should be set. If the emergency brake had been set in this incident, it most likely would have kept the vehicle from moving backwards or at least significantly slowed the vehicle’s movement.

Recommendation #3: Consider requiring vehicle engines to be shut off before exiting vehicles.

Discussion: The safest course of action when exiting a vehicle is to place the vehicle in “park,” shut off the engine and set the emergency brake. In this situation, the victim apparently was going to investigate the damage done to the trailer and it would have been prudent to shut off the vehicle. Also, when individuals exit a vehicle to do a security check of a building, the vehicle should be shut off. In addition to the safety aspect of shutting the vehicle off, if the operator takes the keys, it also precludes someone from stealing the running vehicle. Granted, shutting off the engine each time the operator exits a vehicle may seem like an inconvenience, but the return in safety and security is well worth the slight inconvenience.