

DATE: December 30, 1997

FROM: Minnesota Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (MN FACE)
Program Minnesota Department of Health

SUBJECT: MN FACE Investigation 97MN038
Farmer Youth Dies After Being Run Over By A Grass Seeder

SUMMARY

A 13-year-old farm youth (victim) died of injuries sustained when he was run over by a grass seeder. The victim and an adult coworker used a seeder to seed grass around the perimeter of a recently built earthen waste treatment lagoon. The adult coworker drove a tractor pulling the seeder around the rim of the lagoon. While he pulled the seeder, the victim rode in an area between the seeder and the tractor on the hitch of the seeder to ensure that seed flowed from the entire length of it. While the tractor operator drove forward, the victim used his hand to reach into the open seed compartments and keep the seed evenly distributed inside the compartments. While he was doing this, he apparently lost his balance and fell from the frame of the seeder and was run over by it. Shortly after the victim fell from the machine, the tractor operator noticed him on the ground behind the seeder. After he stopped the tractor he rushed to the victim and then placed a call to emergency medical personnel. They arrived shortly after being notified and pronounced the victim dead at the scene. MN FACE investigators concluded that to reduce the likelihood of similar occurrences, the following guidelines should be followed:

- operators should never allow any passengers to ride along on equipment.

INTRODUCTION

On September 22, 1997, MN FACE investigators were notified of a farm work-related fatality that occurred on September 13, 1997. The county sheriff's department was contacted and releasable information was obtained. Information obtained included a copy of their report of the incident and copies of their photos of the incident site. A site investigation was not conducted by MN FACE investigators. During MN FACE investigations, incident information is obtained from a variety of sources such as law enforcement agencies, county coroners and medical examiners, employers,

coworkers, and family members.

INVESTIGATION

On the day of the incident, the victim and an adult coworker used a seeder to seed grass around the perimeter of a recently built earthen waste treatment lagoon. The seeder was 10 feet long and had two seed compartments that were fitted with hinged covers. The covers opened from the back of the seeder toward the front of the seeder. The sloped inside surface of the bowl shaped lagoon had been lined with rock to within approximately 10 feet of the rim of the lagoon. The slope of the inside wall of the lagoon was approximately 5 percent.

The adult coworker drove the tractor pulling the seeder in a counterclockwise direction around the rim of the lagoon. While he pulled the seeder, it was tilted to the left because of the slope of the lagoon and the left wheel of it traveled along the edge of the rock that lined the lagoon. Since the seeder was being pulled along sloping terrain the grass seed inside of it moved to the low end of the seed compartments and resulted in uneven distribution of the seed. The victim rode in an area between the seeder and the tractor on the hitch of the seeder to ensure that grass seed flowed from the entire length of the seeder. While the tractor operator drove forward at approximately 2-3 miles per hour, the victim used his hand to reach into the open seed compartments and push the seed to the high end of them. While he was doing this, he apparently lost his balance, fell from the frame of the seeder and was run over by it. Shortly after the victim fell from the machine, the tractor operator noticed him on the ground behind the seeder. After he stopped the tractor he rushed to the victim and then placed a call to emergency medical personnel. They arrived shortly after being notified and pronounced the victim dead at the scene.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was not available when this report was completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: Operators should never allow any passengers to ride along on equipment.

Discussion: The victim in this incident was fatally injured when he fell from a machine that was not designed to carry workers. Whenever workers ride on equipment they are at risk of being

seriously injured if they either fall from or are thrown from the machine. Equipment operators should never allow passengers to ride along on equipment. Self-propelled farm machines such as tractors are designed to carry only one person, the operator. In addition, the proper place for the operator to ride is sitting in the operator's seat. Passengers may be thrown from machines as the result of unexpected movements such as bumps or turns. Passengers can cause additional problems such as interfering with the operator's vision, interfering with the operation of machine controls, and distraction of the operator's attention from the tasks being performed.

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