
Farmer Dies After Being Pinned Between Tractor Tire and Hayrack

SUMMARY

The victim was alone at the time that the incident occurred. This report is based upon a review of a written sheriff's department report, a review of copies of their photos of the incident, and a telephone interview with a sheriff's deputy who responded to the scene.

A 70-year-old male farmer (victim) died from injuries sustained after he was pinned between a rear tractor tire and a hayrack. The victim left his farmyard near mid-day with a tractor and two hayracks and drove to a hay field to fill the racks with large round hay bales. He arrived at the hay field, unhooked the hayracks and began loading bales onto the racks. After he filled the front hayrack and loaded four bales on the second hayrack, he hooked the hayracks to the tractor drawbar. He drove to another location in the field, stopped the tractor and got off of it to unhook the hayracks. When he removed the hitch pin, the hayracks rolled forward and pinned him between the left rear tractor tire and a large round hay bale that extended beyond the edge of the hayrack. The victim's wife became concerned when he did not return from the hay field. She called a neighbor and told him that she hadn't seen her husband since he left the farmyard earlier during the day. The neighbor drove to the hay field and found the victim pinned between the tractor tire and the hayrack. He called emergency medical personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after being notified. They removed the victim and pronounced him dead at the scene. MN FACE investigators concluded that in order to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents, the following guidelines should be followed:

- *whenever possible, operators should select terrain that is level when unhitching equipment;*
and
- *operators should block the wheels of equipment if it must be unhitched on sloping terrain.*

INTRODUCTION

On December 19, 1995, MN FACE investigators were notified of a farm work-related incident that occurred on December 14, 1995. The county sheriff's department was contacted and releasable information 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.

INVESTIGATION

The victim used a farm tractor and two flatbed hayracks to haul large round hay bales from a farm field. A front-end loader, equipped with a general purpose bucket was mounted on the tractor. Attached to the bucket were two bale tines or spears that were used to pick-up large round hay bales.

The victim left his farmyard with the tractor and hayracks at approximately 12:30 P.M. on the day of the incident. He drove to a hay field located three miles north of his farmyard to fill the racks with large round hay bales. The hay field was covered with approximately two inches of snow on the day of the incident. After he arrived at the hay field, he unhooked the hayracks from the tractor and began loading bales onto them. After he loaded eight bales on the front hayrack and four bales on the second hayrack, he again hooked them to the tractor drawbar. He then drove to another location in the field that was closer to other hay bales.

After he drove to the new location, he stopped the tractor and got off to unhook the hayracks. He left the engine running and also left the tractor transmission in neutral. He walked around to the back of the tractor and pulled the hitch pin from the drawbar. After he removed the hitch pin, the hayracks rolled forward. The victim moved toward the left side of the tractor and was pinned between the left rear tractor tire and a large round hay bale that extended several inches beyond the front edge of the hayrack. Since there were no tire tracks in the snow in front of the front tractor tires, it was determined that the tractor did not roll backward.

The victim's wife became concerned when he did not return from the hay field. She called a neighbor and told him that she hadn't seen her husband since he left the farmyard near mid-day. The neighbor drove to the hay field and found the victim pinned between the tractor tire and the hayrack. He immediately called emergency medical personnel who arrived at the scene shortly after being notified. They removed the victim and pronounced him dead at the scene.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The cause of death listed on the death certificate was asphyxia due to entrapment between tractor tire and large round hay bale.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

Recommendation #1: Whenever possible, operators should select terrain that is level when unhitching equipment.

Discussion: Firm and level terrain should be chosen whenever possible when wheeled equipment is unhitched from tractors and other motorized vehicles. This is necessary to reduce the likelihood of equipment "run away", either immediately after the equipment is unhitched or at a later time. Sloping terrain increases the potential for "run away" equipment that may cause injury or death if workers are struck by the equipment. "Run away" equipment may also cause significant damage or property loss as the result of collisions with other equipment or farm buildings. Personal injuries and property losses

from "run away" equipment can be avoided if operators carefully select level terrain locations when unhitching equipment from tractors and other motorized vehicles.

Recommendation #2: Operators should block the wheels of equipment if it must be unhitched on sloping terrain.

Discussion: If wheeled equipment must be unhitched on sloping terrain, the wheels of the equipment should be blocked before the hitch pin is removed. This is necessary to ensure that the equipment does not roll away and cause injury to people or damage to property. In this incident, the terrain where the tractor and hayracks were parked sloped downhill toward the tractor. When the hitch pin was removed from the tractor drawbar, the hayracks rolled forward and pinned the victim against one of the rear tractor tires. If the hayrack wheels had been blocked before the hitch pin was removed, this fatality would have been prevented.

REFERENCES

1. Agriculture Safety, Fundamentals of Machine Operation, 1987, Deere & Company, Moline, Illinois, Third Edition.

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