

*Public Health
KY FACE #95KY04601
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SUBJECT: Farmer is run over by disc after falling from tractor

PARTIAL INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

Because access to the scene and inspection of the equipment were not possible in this case, a partial inspection was done. Conclusions cannot be drawn from the evidence collected.

A 68-year-old farmer died when he fell from his tractor into the path of an attached disc. The victim had begun discing a tobacco field about 3:00 p.m., minutes after his wife and son left for second-shift work at a factory. After completing one field, he proceeded to a second field to complete the afternoon's work. The second field was across a small galley. As the victim drove the tractor through the gully, he fell from the moving tractor and was run over by the disc.

INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 1995, KY FACE was notified by an Occupational Health Nurses in Agricultural Communities (OHNAC) nurse of a farm fatality in a Kentucky community. An investigation was immediately initiated. The case was discussed with the county coroner by phone and arrangements were made to meet him. Subsequent calls to the coroner revealed that an attorney representing the family had requested we not burden the victim's wife or son regarding the case. A site visit to the coroner's office on June 23, 1995, yielded some information regarding the scene. A copy of the coroner's report was obtained and reviewed. However, attempts to work with the attorney were unsuccessful.

INVESTIGATION

The victim had been a full-time farmer all of his life. His son lived with him and helped manage the 270-acre farm where they had cattle and 13 acres of tobacco. The victim's wife and their son worked second shift at a factory. He had owned the disc and the 28-year-old Farmall tractor involved in the incident for many years. He had performed this same task annually for over 20 years. The tractor seat had been replaced approximately one year ago. The tractor was not equipped with a seatbelt, according to the coroner. Also, photos confirmed that it did not have a Roll Over Protective Structure (ROPS).

The victim began discing the field as his wife and son went to work. As he completed one field and proceeded to another through a galley, he was either thrown off or fell off the tractor and was run over by the disc. At 12:20 am, the victim's wife and son returned from work. They began a search for the victim and discovered him in the galley. The tractor was still running. It had collided with a fence post and continued to spin its rear wheel. The emergency medical service (EMS) received the 911 call at 12:44 a.m. and arrived at the scene at 1:02 a.m. At 1:33 the coroner arrived and pronounced the victim dead of blunt traumatic injuries sustained when run over by a disc cultivator. The victim was taken from the scene to the coroner's office. An autopsy was done and results and toxicology reports were negative.

The tractor seat came off the tractor and was found several feet from the victim. The victim's son reported to the coroner that the seat had been replaced by the victim about a year prior to the incident. The portion of the seat which attaches to the tractor was not recovered.

Because the tractor and scene were not available and family members were not willing to talk about the case, this partial investigation was completed. Conclusions drawn from the evidence collected would make any statement about the cause and circumstances a difficult and speculative process.