

MO FACE Investigation #95MO060

SUBJECT:

Sanitation Worker Struck By Trash Collection Vehicle In Missouri

SUMMARY:

On June 5, 1995, a 43-year-old sanitation worker (victim) was run over by the sanitation vehicle from which he was working. The victim and his employer (driver) were collecting residential refuse from homes located along a state highway. The workers were on a rural route and were in a rural section of a small town. The workers were using a side-loading collection vehicle with a left side loading step. The step was designed for loading refuse but not for riding on the vehicle. The victim had collected the refuse from a residence on the right side of the highway and was proceeding to collect the refuse from a residence on the left side. The driver stated that he checked his mirrors and saw the victim crossing the highway. He then drove onto the highway from the right side shoulder. It appears the victim may have tried to jump onto the loading step on the left side of the vehicle and ride to the next stop, but the driver was unaware that the victim was attempting to ride on the vehicle. The victim fell into the path of the left rear wheel, and the vehicle ran over the victim's lower extremities. Emergency assistance was requested and a local ambulance service responded. A life-flight helicopter was requested to transport the victim to regional trauma center where life-saving efforts were unsuccessful.

The MO FACE Investigator concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- ▶ develop and strictly enforce policies prohibiting trash collectors from riding on loading steps of trash collection vehicles;
- ▶ consider equipping side-loading refuse collection vehicles with extended fenders or additional body panels to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of workers landing in the path of the vehicle's wheels in the event of a fall.

INTRODUCTION:

On June 5, 1995, a 43-year-old sanitation worker (victim) was struck by a sanitation vehicle. The victim and his employer (driver) were collecting residential refuse from houses located along a state highway. On June 20, 1995, the MO FACE Investigator was notified of the incident by a newspaper clipping. On July 15, 1995, the investigator traveled to and photographed the incident site. On July 16, 1995, the Investigator interviewed the company owner and photographed the refuse collection vehicle.

The employer in this incident operates a rural refuse collection service employing himself and the victim at the time of the incident. The victim had been employed for five months prior to the incident. According to the employer, the victim was told not to ride on the loading step on this vehicle and received training that specifically addressed this hazard. The victim received training in operating the compaction equipment on this vehicle as well as on a larger rear loading refuse collection vehicle owned by the employer. The employer did not have a written safety policy.

INVESTIGATION:

On Monday, June 5, 1995 (the day of the incident), the victim was accompanying the employer (driver) on a rural refuse collection route. The weather was warm, sunny and dry. The vehicle involved in this incident is a 1994 Ford 1-ton super duty chassis with a side-loading refuse compactor manufactured by MARTCO Waste System Equipment, Model MSLC 8. This equipment can be operated by one or two persons. This equipment is mainly used for rural refuse collection. Collectors are required to ride in the cab of the truck between stops. This equipment does not have riding steps.

Earlier on the morning of the incident the employer had made several pickups and returned to his home/office around 9:00 am to pick up the victim. The employer and victim then left to run that day's collection route. They had made several stops before arriving at the incident site at approximately 10:30 am.

Arriving at the area of the incident, the victim exited the truck cab and picked up the refuse located on the right side of the highway. The victim then was going to cross the highway and walk up to the next stop. The driver checked his mirrors and saw the victim start across the highway. The driver then pulled out onto the highway and proceeded to the next stop. He was not aware that the victim had attempted to climb on the left-side loading step. The victim, in an attempt to board the loading step, may have slipped or fell off the step and into the path of the rear truck wheel. Emergency personnel were notified and a local physician assisted in treating the victim. The victim was transported to a trauma center, located approximately 40 miles away, by life-flight helicopter. Emergency treatment was not successful and the victim was pronounced dead a short time later.

CAUSE OF DEATH:

Massive abdominal trauma

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Employers should develop and strictly enforce policies prohibiting trash collectors from riding on loading steps of trash collection vehicles.

Discussion: The loading step on the vehicle is not designed to be ridden while the truck is in motion. It is designed only as a step to assist the loader in placing garbage bags in the compacting bay of the truck. Because the incident was not witnessed, it is unclear how the victim was struck. The injuries sustained by the victim suggest that the step was somehow involved.

Recommendation #2: Employers should consider equipping side loading refuse collection vehicles with extended fenders or additional body panels to eliminate or

reduce the likelihood of workers landing in the path of vehicles' wheels in the event of a fall.

Discussion: Though riding on the step should be prohibited, the worker using the step while loading trash is still in danger. An open space of several feet existed between the loading step and the rear wheels of the vehicle. This space was not equipped with any fenders or body work. Consideration should be given to covering this space with an extension of the truck body. Extended fenders or additional body panels would not prohibit a fall from the step, but could be installed in such a way that anyone falling off the step would be deflected from the path of the wheels.

The Missouri Department of Health, in co-operation with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), is conducting a research project on work-related fatalities in Missouri. The goal of this project, known as the Missouri Occupational Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (**MO FACE**), is to show a measurable reduction in traumatic occupational fatalities in the State of Missouri. This goal is being met by identifying causal and risk factors that contribute to work-related fatalities. Identifying these factors will enable more effective intervention strategies to be developed and implemented by employers and employees. This project does not determine fault or legal liability associated with a fatal incident or with current regulations. All **MO FACE** data will be reported to **NIOSH** for trend analysis on a national basis. This will help **NIOSH** provide employers with effective recommendations for injury prevention. All personal/company identifiers are removed from all reports sent to **NIOSH** to protect the confidentiality of those who voluntarily participate with the program.

SIGNATURES:

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DISSEMINATION LIST

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St. Louis County Department of Community Health
St. Louis County Medical Examiner Office
The Educational Center on Family Violence
University of Missouri, Agricultural Engineering