

REPORT #:
71-278-2026

REPORT DATE:
6/10/2026

INCIDENT DATE:
7/1/2025

WORKER:
61 years old

INDUSTRY:
Potato Farming

OCCUPATION:
Equipment Operator

SCENE:
Crop field

EVENT TYPE:
Caught in or Between



Trailer tipped on side at incident scene.

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AGRICULTURE FATALITY NARRATIVE

Farm Equipment Operator Crushed by Cone Bottom Nurse Trailer

SUMMARY

A 61-year-old equipment operator at a potato farm was crushed under a cone bottom nurse trailer when it flipped after he climbed a ladder attached to the back of it to close a latch on the tank lid.

He had worked for his employer, a potato and onion grower and packer, for 20 years as an equipment operator and irrigation assistant.

He was with a coworker in an irrigation field. They had dropped off the one-axle trailer at the pivot point of the irrigation system.

The trailer's 525-gallon plastic cone bottom tank was full of gypsum powder, which was to be used for conditioning soil. The trailer and powder weighed an estimated 4,000 lbs.

When they were walking back to leave in separate work trucks, he noticed that a latch on the tank lid was not properly fastened. He decided to close it by climbing a metal ladder attached to the back of the trailer.

As he climbed the ladder, the trailer began to tip back. He could not escape and was crushed. While pinned, he yelled out his coworker's name for help.

The coworker ran and moved the trailer off him. The coworker then contacted their supervisor and began CPR.

The supervisor called 911 and got to the scene a few minutes later to assist. They continued CPR until paramedics arrived. Shortly after, the worker was pronounced dead and taken away by the coroner.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The employer had attached a rear jack to the trailer to prevent it from tipping over due to its high center of gravity. The operator did not use the jack when he unhooked the trailer and climbed the ladder.
- The employer did not train the operator and his coworker in the company's step-by-step trailer parking procedure, which included how to set the rear jack before unhooking the trailer.
- The trailer was left parked on soft sandy ground against the manufacturer's safety instructions to place it on a level surface strong enough to support its total weight.

REQUIREMENTS

Employers must:

- The employer must furnish and require employees to use any safety devices and safeguards that are needed to control recognized hazards. All agricultural methods, operations, and processes must be designed to promote the safety and health of employees. See [WAC 296-307-045\(2\)](#)
- The manufacturer's instruction manual, if published by the manufacturer and currently available, must be the source of information for the safe operation and maintenance of field equipment. See [WAC 296-307-076\(2\)](#)
- The employer must provide safety education and training programs. See [WAC 296-307-018\(7\)](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE investigators concluded, that to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- **Develop trailer parking policies and procedures.** Include policies and step-by-step trailer parking procedures for workers to follow in your written [accident prevention program](#) (APP) developed according to the equipment manufacturer's safety instructions. Instruct supervisors how to implement the policies.
- **Perform a job hazard analysis (JHA).** Supervisors and equipment operators should jointly identify trailer hazards and develop solutions before putting equipment into use. [JHAs](#) should be documented and updated whenever equipment is modified or replaced. Ensure workers always have access to JHAs.
- **Provide trailer safety training.** Training should be hands-on, recurrent, documented, and tailored to each specific type of trailer. Do not allow workers to operate trailers until they demonstrate safe usage.

RESOURCES

UArk [2017]. [Large Farm Equipment Accident Prevention](#). Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture.

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