

Tractor Driver Crushed by Scraper-Roller¹

California NURSE Project²

SUMMARY : CASE 191-010-01

A tractor driver was towing a scraper and a roller through a walnut orchard. The ground in walnut orchards is graded and packed in this way before the nuts are harvested. The driver was probably looking over his shoulder to guide the equipment he was towing when he drove under a low tree branch. The branch knocked him off the back of the tractor. The tractor continued moving forward and dragged the scraper and then the roller over the driver. His chest was crushed and he bled to death on the scene.

How could this death have been prevented?

- By trimming the branches along the rows where the tractor is driven.
- By checking the rows for low branches before driving the tractor down them.
- By equipping the tractor with a roll-over protection device, cage, or shield to deflect low-lying branches.
- By requiring the tractor driver to wear a seat belt.
- By having an automatic shut-off so that a tractor without a driver cannot move forward.

The NURSE (Nurses Using Rural Sentinel Events) project is conducted by the California Occupational Health Program of the California Department of Health Services, in conjunction with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. The program's goal is to prevent occupational injuries associated with agriculture. Injuries are reported by hospitals, emergency medical services, clinics, medical examiners, and coroners. Selected cases are followed up by conducting interviews of injured workers, co-workers, employers, and others involved in the incident. An on-site safety investigation is also conducted. These investigations provide detailed information on the worker, the work environment, and the potential risk factors resulting in the injury. Each investigation concludes with specific recommendations

1. This document, CDHS(COHP)-FI-92-005-03, was extracted from a series of the Nurses Using Rural Sentinel Events (NURSE) project, conducted by the California Occupational Health Program of the California Department of Health Services, in conjunction with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Publication date: May 1992.

2. NURSE Project, California Occupational Health Program, 2151 Berkeley Way, Annex 11, Berkeley, CA 94704.