

Maintenance Worker's Arm Broken by Fruit-Tray Transporter¹

California NURSE Program²

SUMMARY : CASE 192-012-01

A maintenance worker in a fruit drying plant was cleaning and oiling a *tray transporter*. A tray transporter is a set of rollers which move trays of fruit across the plant. The rollers are turned by a chain drive and a rotating shaft. The safe method to clean and oil this tray transporter is to shut the power off, lock the power switch, unbolt a guard that shields the rollers, and work on that side, opposite the chain drive and shaft.

To save time the worker left the transporter running and did not unbolt the guard. Instead he climbed under the transporter and worked on the same side as the rotating shaft. When he leaned over the rotating shaft to oil the rollers the shaft caught his jacket sleeve. The shaft pulled his arm in and broke both bones in his forearm. His partner got to the switch in a few seconds and turned off the machine.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Follow safety procedures. The plant had a procedure for shutting off the power and oiling the rollers from the safe side.
- Do not wear loose clothing when working around machinery.

- Make sure that company safety procedures are acceptable to workers. If workers skip safety steps the steps may need to be changed.
- Foremen should go over safety procedures with workers when they assign jobs.

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 designed to prevent injuries, for the use of employers, workers, and others concerned about health and safety in agriculture.

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