

Tractor Runs Over Asparagus Sledder¹

California NURSE Project²

SUMMARY : CASE 292-008-01

An asparagus sledder was loading bunches of asparagus into large bins. The bins ride on platforms built onto a tractor. As the tractor moves slowly through the field, the sledder steps off the platform, scoops up a bundle of asparagus, jumps back on the platform and puts the asparagus into the bin.

The field was soft and bumpy, and the platforms and bins were bouncing around. The sledder jumped onto the platform with a load of asparagus in his hands. He tried to lean against a bin to steady himself, but the bin had bounced out of position. He lost his balance and fell against the rear wheel of the tractor. The tire tread caught his loose jacket and pulled him off the platform and down to the ground. The wheel then ran over his chest. Fortunately, the ground was soft and the tire pressed the worker into the dirt without crushing his chest.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Wear tight-fitting clothing when working around moving machinery.
- Think safety when redesigning equipment. The tractor should have had a guard rail to protect the worker from the rear wheel, and the bins should have been anchored to the platforms.
- Work as a team. The tractor driver might have been able to stop the tractor when the sledder fell if he was watching his partner.
- Keep hands free when working.

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.

1. This document, CDHS(COHP)-FI-92-005-10, 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.