

## Irrigator Worker in ATV Crash on Dairy Farm<sup>1</sup>

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California NURSE Project<sup>2</sup>

### SUMMARY : CASE 192-110-01

The irrigators on a dairy farm use *three-wheel ATVs* (All Terrain Vehicle) to move around the farm. An irrigator is someone who supplies land with water by artificial means. An ATV is a motorcycle with a three-wheel tricycle carriage and large tires for off-road use. An irrigator was driving an ATV down a dirt road on the dairy farm when an insect flew into his eye. He was blinded by the insect and did not see a "windrower," a large agricultural machine, which was parked in the middle of the road. The worker drove directly into the windrower. The driver was thrown off the ATV and hit a bar running along the front of the windrower, breaking his thigh, knee and ankle. The front of the ATV was completely destroyed.

The irrigator did not have anyone periodically checking on him. He laid on the ground with a broken leg for two hours until the workday ended and co-workers leaving work noticed he was missing. After they found him, he was taken by helicopter to an emergency department where his broken leg was operated on.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- If the irrigator had been wearing safety goggles the insect would not have temporarily blinded him.
- Do not leave equipment so it blocks a road.
- Use safe equipment. Three-wheel ATVs are known to be less safe than four wheel ATVs equipped with a seat belt and Roll-over Protection Structure (ROPS).

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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1. This document, CDHS(COHP)-FI-92-005-14, 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.