

Farm Worker's Skull Fractured by Exploding Brake¹

California NURSE Project²

SUMMARY : CASE 192-383-01

Workers were harvesting almonds. The trailers they used to haul the almonds were leased. Moving these trailers was to be done only by the company owning the trailers, or the farmer could use a forklift. In order to save time, the farmer told his son and a farm worker to move the trailer without using a forklift.

The son and farm worker crawled under the trailer to unlock the brakes. They loosened the ring clamp from the outside housing of the brakes. This released a loaded spring, which sent the top of the outside housing flying into the farm worker's forehead.

Neither the farmer nor co-workers were trained in first aid. The farmer put the injured farm worker in his pickup truck, called 911, and drove him to a nearby road. An ambulance took him to a trauma center, where he was admitted with a broken skull.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Employers should not ask workers to do tasks which they have not been trained to do.
- Equipment should be designed so that workers will not be exposed to hazards.
- Employers should have written safety programs. These programs can help workers and employers identify hazards.
- At the work site, at least one person should be trained in first aid.

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-93-005-24, 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: January 1993

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