

Tractor Driver's Head Crushed by Moving Tractor¹

California NURSE Project²

SUMMARY : CASE 192-459-01

During the raisin harvest a farm owner noticed that one of his tractor drivers seemed sick. He was shaking and looked like he had a fever. The farmer asked the driver if he felt sick, but the driver wanted to keep working.

The next day the farm owner and five workers drove a line of tractors from one vineyard to another. The tractors traveled along a county road at about 12 miles per hour. One of the tractors went off the road and into a field. The driver was the worker who had seemed sick the day before. It looked as if he was having a seizure as his tractor crossed the field. He fell to the ground when his tractor ran into a row of grape vines. The tractor continued moving forward. A rear wheel crushed the tractor driver's head. He died instantly.

How could this death have been prevented?

- All tractors should be equipped with seat belts and rollover protective structures (ROPS).
- Workers should not try to work when they are feeling sick.
- Tractors should be equipped with safety devices which stop them from moving forward when the driver is not in the seat.

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

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