

## **Worker Scalped in Fruit Packing Plant<sup>1</sup>**

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California NURSE Project<sup>2</sup>

### **SUMMARY: CASE 193-209-01**

Early one morning a worker was setting up her work station in a packing plant. Her job was to stamp fruit boxes as they moved past her on a roller transport system. First she had to put a hair net on and arrange the stamps on her table. Her table was right next to the roller transport system. As she laid the stamps on the table, one fell on the ground.

The worker began bending over to pick up the stamp. Her hair net was not on yet. Her long, loose hair grazed the fast moving rollers and started tangling in them. The rollers continued pulling her hair in until a large part of her scalp tore off.

Immediately, her supervisor turned off the rollers and wrapped the injured worker's head in a shirt. Co-workers ran to the plant office to call 911. Later, at a hospital doctors tried, but could not reattach the worker's scalp.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Employers should require workers to put on all personal protective equipment before entering the work area (such as hair nets).
- Employers should make sure work areas are free of hazards (such as unguarded rollers).
- Employers should install the safest possible equipment in the work area.
- First aid kits should be in the work area.

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