

## Foot Amputated by Fan in Fig Orchard<sup>1</sup>

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California NURSE Project<sup>2</sup>

### SUMMARY : CASE 192-207-01

A farm worker was driving a mechanical harvester in a fig orchard. This harvester swept up the figs from the orchard ground. Then, a conveyor belt carried the figs past a big fan on the side of the machine which blew the dirt off them. A metal cover guarded the fan blades, but not the fan's exhaust outlet. Before his lunch break, the worker left the fan running and stood in front of the exhaust outlet, blowing the dirt and dust off his clothing. His foot entered the exhaust outlet to where it could touch the fan blades, about nine inches inside. The fan blades amputated his foot below the ankle.

A co-worker turned off the harvester, and the worker's foreman called 911 from a truck. Paramedics took the worker and his severed foot to the hospital. The foot was too mangled for doctors to sew back on. Later, doctors amputated his left leg below the knee so he could use an artificial leg.

How could this injury have been prevented?

- Employers should put guards wherever a person can touch moving equipment.
- Workers should use machinery only for the purposes for which it was designed, and for which safety training has been given.

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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