

SAFETY NOTES

Department of Consumer & Business Services
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division
Salem, OR 97310

Serious Disabling Injury Report

Accident type Fall
Industry Agriculture
Employee job title Crop harvester

Description of accident

On an October morning, a crew was harvesting pumpkins using a tractor and two flat-bed trailers. They filled the bins on one of the trailers and hauled the first load of pumpkins to a barn where the pumpkins were to be stored. They disconnected the trailer and seven employees climbed onto the tractor to ride back to the field to get the second trailer-load of pumpkins. Three riders were positioned on the draw-bar area, two rode on the rear-wheel fenders, and two rode the front axle assemblies that extended to each side of the tractor.

As they traveled the dirt road back to the pumpkin field, the employee riding the right side of the front axle assembly fell backwards off the tractor.

The tractor operator stopped immediately, and the crew tended to the victim.

One of the workers returned to the farm to notify the owner, and the fire department was called.

The fire crew administered first aid and the victim was transported to a hospital. He suffered spinal cord injuries and was paralyzed from the neck down. The victim was 53 years old.



Investigation findings

Although the tractor was not equipped or designed to carry passengers, all of the crew climbed on to ride to the field. The two on the front axle assemblies had nothing to grip to keep them from falling. The employer had instructed the workers not to hitch rides on the tractors. The employer conducted safety meetings and safety spot checks of workers out in the fields. He distributed company policies in English and Spanish, and had on hand all rules that apply to his business. No citations were issued.