

SAFETY NOTES

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

Fatality Report

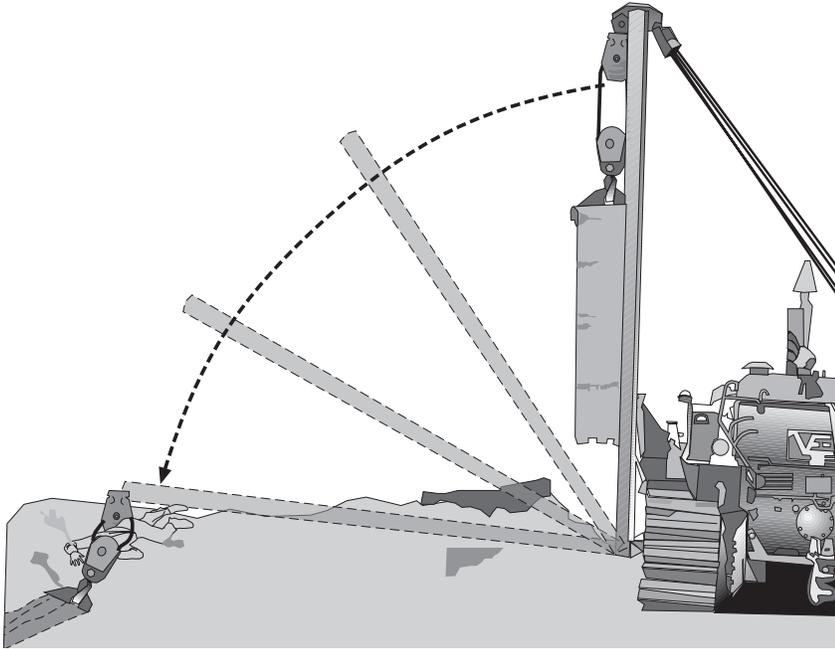
Accident type Crushing
Industry Pipeline construction
Employee job title Laborer

Description of accident

A crew was laying natural gas pipeline on a summer morning. Work had been halted as the boom operator and another equipment operator adjusted the boom brakes on a Caterpillar Side Boom by turning the adjuster bolt. When they finished, the operator called out a “stand clear” warning and began lowering the boom over the excavation area to pick up pipe connectors.

A laborer jumped beneath the boom to grab the boom sling and guide it so that it didn’t damage the pipe below it. The operator pulled back on the boom’s brake lever, but the brakes failed, and the downward motion of the boom was not slowed. The laborer was crushed beneath the boom.

The operator was able to raise the boom off the victim, but he was already dead. A fire/rescue station, the sheriff’s department, and OR-OSHA were notified.



Investigation findings

Investigators found that the brakes had been applied, but had failed because the Side Boom’s brake-adjuster rod was broken. The operator had made requests to have a qualified mechanic make brake adjustments on the equipment, but no action had been taken. The employees who adjusted the brakes were not qualified to do so.

In addition, means of egress from the excavation was not provided. The excavation, which was more than four feet deep, had only a dirt ramp for employee egress, and the ramp was more than 25 feet from where the employees were working.

Applicable standards

The employer was cited and fined for a serious violation of the following:

- CFR 1926.651(c)(2) - The employer did not ensure that employees working in an excavation more than four feet deep be provided a safe means of egress.

To prevent similar accidents

Ensure that equipment is maintained by qualified personnel.

Heed employee advice about necessary equipment maintenance.

If you are an employee operating dangerous equipment, make oral and written requests for repairs that are necessary to protect those who work around the equipment. Take responsibility for the equipment you operate and refuse to operate unsafe equipment.

Test repaired equipment before you allow employees to do tasks that could harm or kill them if the equipment fails to work properly.