



Farm worker fatally injured during unexpected movement of tractor

WorkSafe is investigating an incident where a farm worker was fatally injured when it appears that a tractor unexpectedly lurched forward while he was working under it. The tractor involved was over 30 years old and like many older farm tractors, was rarely and irregularly used.

It appears that at the time of the incident, a worker was on the ground underneath the tractor looking for the source of a hydraulic oil leak while a co-worker was in the cabin. It appears that the tractor moved unexpectedly and the worker under the tractor was subsequently fatally injured.

Prevention of incidents of this type

1. Ageing machinery can develop 'wear' and 'fatigue' faults which may only be identified by random or 'first time' events such as gear selectors failing to engage both selection plates despite the appearance of the gear selection lever being in neutral at start up.
2. Gradual deterioration in the gear selectors and linkages may not be immediately identified and mechanical servicing done by engine hours may span months or even years.
3. Lack of control measures in relation to preventing unexpected movement when plant needs to be powered for diagnostic purposes such as:
 - ensuring persons are clear of the plant during start up; and/or
 - consider using blocks, chocks or inspection pits.
4. Operators not ensuring that vehicle controls (gear selectors and plates, brakes) are in the correct position.

Managing hazards and risks

1. Be aware of the inherent risks with aging mobile plant and the intermittent faults that may occur.
2. If you have older mobile plant, particularly if used irregularly, it should be regularly inspected by a competent person.
3. When workers are doing maintenance on mobile plant clearly define the work involved, identify hazards (for example, unexpected movement of mobile plant), assess the risks and implement appropriate control measures.
4. Workers must be instructed and trained about the hazards associated with doing maintenance on mobile plant, and about the relevant control measures.

Further information

- [Agricultural safety and health checklist](#)
- [Checklist for plant](#)
- [Guidance note – Powered mobile plant – Making it safe](#)
- [Safety and health alert 01/2015 Vehicles and mobile plant causing deaths at workplaces](#)

The above information is provided based on WorkSafe's preliminary investigation and further investigation is continuing.

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