Shortcut Kills Nursery Laborer



It was a blustery, rainy morning when Craig drove into the nursery parking lot. But the rain didn't dampen his spirits. He was just happy he'd landed a job – and a good one at that. Only three days earlier , 24 year old Craig had been hired to operate the skid-steer used to transport the metal carts of plants to the greenhouse . The job's pace was steady , the people seemed friendly and Craig was pretty much left alone to do his work .

Craig waved at his co-workers as he hopped into the operator's cage. Fred and Sarah waved back. "Eager fella, that one," laughed Fred. Sarah smiled and nodded.

Several hours later, when Sarah joined Fred for lunch, she glanced around the staff room. "Hey, where's the new guy?" she asked.

Fred shrugged. "Haven't seen him since morning. Probably trying to show us up," he grinned. "He'll get over that in a hurry."

After lunch, Fred and Sarah went looking for Craig. When they found him, the skid-steer was still running, but Craig, lying limp in the operator's cage with his coat draped across his lap, was dead.

No one really knows what happened, but investigators believe that when Craig approached the greenhouse with a new load, the greenhouse door was shut. Because of the weather, Craig chose to jump out of the skid- steer to open the door, without shutting off the power. As Craig started to leave the loader , the pocket of his coat – which he'd placed across his lap to protect his pants from the rain – c aught on the still- active operational hand controls . When the machine jolted forward , the sudden movement caused Craig to strike his head forcefully against the left-front roll bar. He died of a traumatic brain injury.

Loose clothing, tool belts and other items can entangle or interfere with operator controls. Before you operate equipment, check to make sure that the controls are clear of all obstacles. And always shut down and completely turn off the power before leaving the operator's cage.