Skid Steer Safety Fatality Report



Case No. 1—Defeat of Interlocked Controls

On February 7, 2015, a 37yearold male farmer died after he was struck by the falling bucket of a skid steer loader. The incident occurred after the victim used the loader for chores and parked it in an open garage without cleaning accumulated mud, snow, and manure from the foot operated lift arm and bucket controls. When the victim shut down the machine and exited from it, he stepped on the lift arm control, moving it to the lift position. The debris then froze, locking the controls in place. After about an hour, the victim returned, entered the loader, and started the engine. The lift arms rose until the bucket contacted the header over the open garage door. The victim shut down the machine, dismounted, knelt on the ground under the raised bucket in front of the machine, and began cleaning the frozen controls with a pry bar. While cleaning, he unintentionally moved the lift arm foot pedal control to the down position. The lift arms suddenly moved down, pinning the victim between the bucket and frame of the machine. The victim was discovered by his wife, who immediately boarded the machine, started the engine, and attempted to raise the bucket. However, the controls had frozen again, and she was not able to activate the lift control pedal. A farm employee unsuccessfully tried to raise the bucket with a jack. The victim was freed by a local fire department. Resuscitation efforts began at the scene and continued during transport of the victim to a local hospital, but they were unsuccessful. The victim was pronounced dead at the hospital emergency room.

Although several factors contributed to the injury, two factors were critical:

- The interlock system for the lift arm control had been defeated by a glove that was jammed into the linkage connected to the seat belt. A working interlock system would have prevented the lift arms from rising when the victim started the engine.
- The clearance inside the garage was low and prevented the lift arms from rising enough to use the lift arm supports (sliding pins) mounted near the top of the ROPS.