Worker Dies Under Front-End Loader



Tom probably never knew what hit him, and Dean, driving the front-end loader, did not know he just ran over and killed a co-worker.

Tom, 31, was working at a construction site where asphalt and concrete were being recycled. Dean's job was to pick up uncrushed material and drive up an earthen ramp where he dumped it into the crusher. He would then back down the ramp, drive across the worksite and pick up additional material.

The Investigation

Investigators found the loader was equipped with an audible back-up alarm, but it wasn't working at the time of the incident.

Dean just finished dumping material into the crusher. He backed down the ramp and continued to drive backwards across the worksite. He knew that Tom was in the general vicinity, but he didn't know he was walking near the loader. As he was backing across the site, he felt the front tire strike something. Dean suddenly saw Tom lying on the ground in front of the loader.

Investigators learned that prior to the incident, the back-up alarm had malfunctioned (it would make a steady sound instead of an intermittent sound). Dean said he subsequently disabled the warning device by cutting the alarm's wire.

The following recommendations were made after Tom's death:

- Mobile equipment should be equipped with an audible backup warning device as well as sensing units to detect pedestrian workers in blind spots.
- Equipment should always be maintained in proper working condition. If equipment is found to need repair, it should be taken out of service until it is fixed.
- Mobile equipment should be driven in a forward direction as much as possible. When equipment is driven in reverse, bystanders are at greater risk of being run over.
- Employers should design, develop and implement a comprehensive safety program that trains employees to recognize and avoid hazardous work conditions.