

Safety and health alert

15/94 Fatal accident - tractor

Incident

A 24 year old farmhand received fatal abdominal injuries when he was crushed beneath the rear wheel hub of a tractor.

The deceased was assisting two other men in the removal of the rear wheels of the tractor in a machinery shed at a country property.

At the time of the accident the tractor had been raised off the ground with hydraulic bottle jacks. The jacks were supported on an assortment of timber blocks.

During the replacement of one of the rear wheels the tractor slipped sideways off the supporting blocks and jacks. The deceased who had been requested to observe the wheel clearance on the inside of the rim, became pinned underneath the wheel hub on the other side of the tractor.

Factors

1. The method employed to support the weight of the tractor did not restrict lateral movement when the wheels were being replaced, in particular:
 - the timber chocking blocks were six high;
 - the front wheels remained on the ground and were not chocked; and
 - the lateral twisting of the tractor body was not prevented.
2. There was inadequate employee supervision.

Recommendations

1. No one should be beneath a raised tractor whilst wheels are being removed or replaced.
2. No one should be beneath a tractor, vehicle or indeed any structure which relies solely on hydraulic jacks for support.
3. When both rear wheels of a tractor are to be raised they must be raised or lowered in unison.
4. Front wheels shall be chocked and the steering assembly prevented from movement when only the rear wheels of a tractor are raised on jacks and stands.
5. Improvised methods of vehicle support should be avoided. Where practicable axle stands conforming to AS2539 - 1985 should be used.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

