

Safety and health alert

10/00 Farmer escapes death in tractor rollover

Incident

A 31 year old hay farmer received a broken clavicle and bruised sternum when the 1968 Chamberlain tractor he was driving rolled over on a bitumen road bordering his property.

The farmer was travelling at 20 km/hour on the gravel edge of the road (adjacent to the bitumen) when he encountered a white reflector post. To avoid it he veered onto the bitumen. Approximately 200 metres past the post the tractor veered onto the right side of the road. The farmer tried to correct the over-steering, but the process caused the tractor to roll over.

The tractor did not have a roll-over protective structure or seat belt, although it did have a substantial frame supporting a roof to protect the operator from the sun.

Factors

1. The relatively high speed of the tractor at the time of the accident.
2. Over-steering (possibly caused by wear in the steering mechanism) that caused the tractor to turn quickly to the left.
3. The lack of a roll-over protection device (ROPS) built in accordance with Australian Standard AS 1636.1 - 1996, on the tractor.

Recommendations

1. Tractors should not be used until the owner - operator, or employer, has performed an assessment regarding the risk of overturning. In this situation, speed and undulating farm land had made the risk of overturning high. The tractor should have been fitted with a roll-over protective structure complying with the Australian Standard AS 1636.1 - 1996, and a seat belt
2. Properly maintain tractors to ensure that excessive wear of the steering assembly is identified and fixed.
3. Provide adequate instruction, training and supervision on the safe use of tractors based upon the information contained in the WorkSafe WA publication "Safety on the Farm". The document is currently being revised and you can register your interest in the revised version by calling WorkSafe WA on (08) 9327 8775.

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.

