Mechanically Harvested Grapes Stats and Facts



FACTS

1. The harvesting machine works by straddling the row of vines and then shaking the vines with bars mounted on each side of the vine. Ripe grapes fall off the vine and land on a plastic or rubber conveyor belt close to the ground. The conveyor belt works a bit like a zipper. It transports the grapes to a container.
2. Manual harvest can be gentler with the grape bunches and permits for some selection in the vineyard. Machine harvest also permits a selection of the grapes, both because the machine, if well adjusted, can leave unripe grapes on the vine; it can also be equipped with a grape sorting mechanism. A machine makes it possible to harvest much faster, at optimum ripeness.
3. Mechanical harvesters can create additional risks.
    - Clothing and gear can get caught in machinery, which puts workers at risk of being pulled in or down and suffering a traumatic injury.
    - Cuts and lacerations are a constant danger with the involvement of sharp hand tools, vines, canes and wires, along with the risk of exposure to sun and heat.
    - Nearly all grape harvesters begin work before 4am when cooler temperatures help protect the delicate skin of the grapes which presents dangers to workers.

STATS

- Nearly 50 percent of California grape workers work alongside mechanized harvesters in low visibility conditions.
- More than 31,000 workers are employed annually in California’s grape vineyards, including both table grapes and wine grapes.
- The state of California vineyard industry annually averaged 9 fatalities and 3,654 disabling injuries.
- About 42 percent of the non-fatal vineyard injuries are sprains and strains, of which 41 percent are back injuries.
- Viticulture workers found that 20% had signs and symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome and there was a significant association of injury with number of vines cut per day. In another study, found 37% of viticulture workers had nocturnal hand paresthesia, and 12% had handwrits pain, predominantly of the dominant hand.