Truck Crushes Yard Worker



A poorly-maintained truck and an unsafe action combined to kill a worker. The fatality occurred at a plant where asphalt roofing products were being manufactured.

The truck was an old flatbed used only on company property. It was not subject to government regulations for vehicle safety inspection because it was not licensed or insured for the road.

The victim, a yard worker, was asked at the start of his shift to deliver a load of recycled cardboard to a building at the plant. After his delivery, he found he could not start the yard truck again. So he went to the security building and picked up the battery charging pack.

He hooked up the booster cables. Then, while standing outside the cab, he reached in the window and turned on the ignition. The truck jumped forward because it was in third gear and the parking brake was not engaged. The worker was crushed between the side of the truck and a concrete gatepost.

He managed to free himself but collapsed to the ground. When another machine operator found him, the victim asked him to call 911. The co-worker ran to the supervisor's office to report the injury. The yard worker was pronounced dead at the hospital.

How could such a fatality have been prevented?

- Make sure all equipment and vehicles are in safe condition for use. The brake should have been working and the truck should not have been able to start while in gear. An adequate battery would not have had to be boosted in the first place.
- Use a formal process for identifying equipment deficiencies and demand the necessary documentation to show that repairs had been completed. A process such as this ensures feedback is provided to the person who originates the request.
- Make sure you have the proper training to operate equipment safely – even one as commonplace as an old truck. A motor vehicle and other mobile equipment such as forklifts must be operated only from the driver's seat. This worker was the primary operator of the old truck, and probably had been working around its defects without realizing the hazards.

A well-developed safety program and an effective inspection schedule of all equipment by the joint safety committee would have noted the deficiencies and necessary repairs would have been carried out.