INJURY NARRATIVE

Dairy Worker Injured When Clothes Are Caught in Straw Spreader

Industry: Dairy Cattle and Milk Production
Task: Greasing straw spreader
Occupation: Laborer
Type of Incident: Caught in running machinery

Incident Date: December 13, 2016
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In December 2016, a worker at a dairy farm was severely injured when his clothing was caught in the rotating beater bars of a straw spreader that he was greasing. The worker had been employed at the dairy for 7 months, and had worked in the industry for about 4 years. On the day of the incident, he was working to grease the bearings on a hydraulic straw spreader attached to a tractor. This task was performed by farm employees as needed, up to twice a week. The worker told investigators that the farm mechanic had trained him to grease the straw spreader while it was running so that grease would go into the bearings. The employer's accident prevention program included information about lockout/tagout procedures, but not specifically for the straw spreader. The worker said that he had never received training in lockout/tagout procedures. When the worker had finished greasing the bearings on one part of the spreader, he started to duck under the rotating beater bars to get to the next set of bearings underneath the machine. As he bent down, the metal teeth caught hold of his loose hooded sweatshirt and pulled his head and neck into the beaters. The straw spreader had a mechanism to shut off automatically when jammed, but when the beater bars stopped rotating, he remained entangled in the machine and lost consciousness. Another employee found the injured worker caught in the teeth and shut off the power to the straw spreader. The co-worker and a supervisor were able to cut him loose and call emergency services. He underwent surgery for fractures to his neck and skull. After more than six months, he had still not been able to return to work due to the extent of his injuries.

Photo of straw spreader bars. Arrow indicates where worker's clothing was entangled in rotating beater bar.

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Requirements

- Employers must develop, document, and use procedures to control potentially hazardous energy. See WAC 296-307-32013(1)
- Employers must provide training to ensure that employees understand the purpose and function of the energy control program. See WAC 296-307-32019
- Employees must receive training in the recognition of applicable hazardous energy sources, the type and magnitude of the energy available in the workplace, and the methods and means necessary for energy isolation and control. See WAC 296-307-32019(1)

Recommendations

- Always follow lockout/tagout procedures during machine maintenance and repair. Wait until moving parts come to a complete stop before servicing equipment.
- Employers should do spot-checks to ensure that new employees are receiving proper safety training.
- Never wear loose fitting clothing around rotating or moving machine parts.

Resources

Agriculture Safety and Health Pocket Guide www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/f417-255-000.pdf

Dairy farm Safety: Key Hazards and Solutions www.lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F417-261-000.pdf

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