

Fall Hazards

Hay trailer

Klamath County 2005

A 42-year-old rancher fell 12 feet off a trailer onto his head, and died 2 weeks later. The rancher was feeding hay to horses from the top of a trailer when the string broke on a bale he picked up, sending him backward off the trailer. The rancher went to the hospital and was discharged 4 days later. He returned 2 days before his death with shortness of breath. Cause of death was a massive pulmonary embolism.

Augers & Drivelines

Drill rig entanglement

Union County 2005

A 64-year-old drill-rig operator was killed while drilling a water well, when he attempted to recover a hose that dropped down the drill shaft. The machine was in operation, and the operator's fingers were caught under a loop of chain running on a pulley. His hand, arm, and then his entire body were quickly drawn into the pulley. A coworker, untrained to start or stop the engine, began pulling out wires until it shut down.

Water Pressure

Irrigation riser

Deschutes County 2006

A 42-year-old ranch hand was struck in the eye by pressurized water from an irrigation line, and died 5 days later. A riser valve failed when the ranch hand was disconnecting the line. The explosion of water severed an artery in the victim's eye.

Safety Recommendations

1. Three-point rule: Get a firm grip with three of four limbs, especially in icy conditions.
2. Beware of losing your balance from an unexpected release of a weight you are carrying or pulling, or from overreaching.
3. Make sure ladders are in good condition and secure.
4. Avoid standing up from a kneeling position next to a ledge – momentary dizziness can upset your balance.
5. Cover and guard holes securely.

Safety Recommendations

1. Prior to performing maintenance operations on any machine, make sure to de-energize, isolate, and block all forms of hazardous energy. Do not get near an auger or unguarded power take-off (PTO) driveline during operation.
2. Repair or retrofit old equipment to shield any unguarded PTO drivelines.
3. Learn to recognize and avoid hazards. Train all workers in safe practices, and hold regular safety meetings where hazards can be reported and discussed. Continually reinforce safe work behavior.

Safety Recommendations

1. When working with a pressurized water system, stay clear or guard yourself from the outlet path where valves and hoses connect.
2. Components of a pressurized irrigation system should be inspected for defective parts at least annually.
3. Establish an emergency plan for personnel who work alone.

Can you identify fatal hazards on your farm or ranch?

SIX WORKERS ARE KILLED EACH YEAR on farms and ranches in Oregon.

The worker fatality rate in agriculture is far greater than the average worker fatality rate in Oregon.

Operating a vehicle and working with machinery are the most common sources of fatal injury.



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Person Outside Vehicle

Moving combine

Polk County 2003

A 32-year-old grass farmer was killed when he fell under the rear wheel of his moving combine. Entering a new field after making adjustments to the combine, the farmer exited the cab to check the seed flow at the rear while the combine was operating. The farmer was wearing cowboy boots instead of his usual sneakers, and he may have tripped. The rolling rear wheel pulled him under.

Climbing on skid steer

Tillamook County 2005

A 12-year-old girl was killed at her family's dairy farm while climbing on a skid-steer loader while it was running. The girl's mother was operating the skid steer with an agitator attached. The daughter was getting in the machine to take her mother's place when the skid steer started bouncing. The victim lost her balance and was crushed between the frame and the bucket arm.

Tractors

Overtaken tractor

Malheur County 2005

A 17-year-old tractor operator was killed on the family farm when his tractor overturned. The operator was driving on a dirt road in an older-model tractor, with a large implement attached to the back. The tractor veered off the road over an embankment toward a separate field when it overturned in the soft dirt. The victim was crushed by the rear fender and seat of the overturned tractor.

Rolling tractor

Gilliam County 2005

A n 81-year-old rancher was killed when he was run over by a tractor he was operating. The rancher was using an articulated scoop loader to move straw. He exited the operator's seat to open a gate, without shutting down the engine. The tractor started to roll, and the rancher apparently tried to climb back on to stop it. The rear wheel rolled over him.

Safety Recommendations

1. On tractors and most other farm machinery, completely shut down the engine before exiting: gear in neutral, parking brake set, power off. Lower forks and attachments to the ground. On bulldozers, give the blade an extra push down. Read the operator's manual for specific safety instructions.
2. Do not trust the stability of heavy mobile machinery on an incline.
3. Block tires before working beneath a vehicle.
4. You are not a superhero. Do not try to stop a rolling vehicle with your body.

Safety Recommendations

1. Be sure the tractor has rollover protection and seatbelts. Wear the seatbelt securely. For older tractors, retrofit kits are available.
2. Drive slowly on uneven ground or when the road surface changes. Sideways force multiplies exponentially with speed, so even a small bump at a low speed can unbalance a tractor.
3. Use extra caution on slopes, especially when moving with an elevated load. Keep the load low to the ground.

Farm Trucks

Farm truck in ditch

Klamath County 2003

A 20-year-old farm truck driver was killed when his loaded potato truck veered onto loose soil at the edge of an irrigation ditch and overturned. The truck cab was submerged in water in the ditch. The truck had no seatbelts and the driver probably drowned. The incident occurred about 9:30 p.m., after the driver had worked 13 hours on his sixth day of work in a row. Weather was dark and windy. The medical examiner reported the victim was slightly intoxicated. Empty beer cans were found in the cab.

Loaded wheat truck

Sherman County 2004

A 63-year-old farmer was killed when his fully loaded wheat truck failed to negotiate a corner and ran into a rock embankment. The truck had several mechanical problems. The farmer was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. Speed was apparently not a factor. The medical examiner reported the victim's blood alcohol content was over the legal limit.

Safety Recommendations

1. Do not drink alcohol during or before work, especially when driving. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment and performance.
2. Avoid driving while drowsy.
3. When you drive near an abrupt edge, keep your eyes on the road. If distracted even for an instant – stop.
4. Keep your vehicle in good repair. Fix faulty brakes right away.

All-terrain Vehicles

ATV in ditch

Klamath County 2006

A 62-year-old ranch manager was killed when he was flipped from the all-terrain vehicle he was driving and broke his neck. The ranch manager was helping to drive about 300 head of cattle from a distant field, together with two ranch hands, each driving an ATV. The ranch manager drove at the rear with his 7-year-old grandson riding on the gas tank in front of him. While crossing a shallow irrigation ditch at a slow speed through foot-high grass, the front wheel caught at the base of the ditch and the ranch manager was ejected over the top of his rider. The victim died shortly afterward. The young rider was not seriously injured.

Safety Recommendations

1. Wear a helmet and other protective gear when riding an ATV. Gear includes a helmet, eye protection, gloves, long pants, and sturdy boots.
2. Know the terrain. Drive slowly in unknown areas and stay alert for concealed hazards, such as a ditch or a rock in tall grass, or unknown terrain on the far side of a hill.
3. Inspect the ATV before you ride. Be sure controls work properly and you can easily reach them. Do not ride an ATV too big or too small for you.
4. Train before you ride. Read the operator's manual and get safety tips from a rider who knows that particular machine.
5. Do not carry a passenger on an ATV or other mobile machinery unless an appropriate seat and safety harness are available. The extra weight can cause loss of balance and control.