

## Fatality Alert

# Parked vehicles kill

*Parked vehicles killed seven workers in Oregon in less than 1 year, through 2004. REMEMBER, your vehicle could unexpectedly move, even if you are not in it. Please observe the following safety tips.*



## Recommendations

- Shut down engine before exiting vehicle, and engage parking brake.
- Lower blade or forks to the ground on mobile machinery to promote stability before exiting.
- Fix a faulty parking brake right away.
- Do not trust the stability of heavy mobile machinery on an incline.
- Block tires before working beneath a vehicle.
- You are not a superhero. Do not try to stop a rolling vehicle with your body.

## Fatal Incidents

**Runaway tow truck** A tow truck driver was killed while trying to stop his runaway tow truck. Two weeks earlier, the brake on the truck had failed at a service station, and the driver had to jump in and stop it. This apparently happened again on an inclined road outside a wrecking yard. The driver tried to enter the cab while the truck was rolling. He was dragged about 30 ft before striking a parked car. He was crushed between the door and cab of the tow truck.

**Parked forklift** A forklift operator was crushed when the forklift he had been operating engaged in reverse and crushed him against a semi-trailer. To assist a truck driver in tying down a new load, the operator backed the forklift to the opposite side of the trailer, pushed the automatic transmission into neutral, engaged the parking brake, and jumped out to take the strap thrown across the load. The forklift's engine was left running. While the operator was facing the trailer and busy with the strap, the forklift unexpectedly engaged in reverse and backed into him with enough force to make the trailer shudder.

**Fixing starter** A construction contractor operating a rough-terrain forklift was run over and killed while he was working underneath the machine. The contractor apparently did not know the forklift would not start when left in gear, and he was using a screw driver, trying to fix the starter. The screwdriver made contact between the two terminals on the starter, effectively jump-starting the engine and bypassing the safety mechanism that prevented ignition while in gear. The parking brake had not been set, and the forklift rolled over the contractor.

**Runaway pickup** A logger was killed at an active logging site by a pickup truck. Apparently the engine stalled, and the logger exited the cab

when the pickup would not start again. The transmission was in neutral. The event was not witnessed, but the logger may have been underneath the vehicle trying to fix the starter, which had just been replaced the day before and was not working properly. The victim was reportedly aware that the parking brake on the pickup was not functioning for several months prior to the incident.

**Ranch bulldozer** A ranch hand was killed while operating a D4E Caterpillar in a bulldozer logging operation. The ranch hand was an experienced logger and was in the process of yarding logs. With the engine running, parking brake set, and the front blade raised about 1 ft off the ground, the ranch hand was busy setting chokers behind the bulldozer. The bulldozer was on a slight incline and the tracks were on branches, which may have contributed to instability. As the ranch hand leaned down, the bulldozer dislodged and slid backward over him.

**Moving bus** A bus driver was run over by the city bus she had been driving. The driver exited the bus to take a scheduled break at a transit center. She left the engine running, and walked to the driver's side to reach in the window, probably to close the door as is common practice among drivers. The bus began to move forward, and the driver ran to the front with outstretched arms, apparently trying to stop the 15-ton vehicle. The bus ran over her. How the bus could have moved forward on flat ground remains uncertain. The parking brake was apparently set, which prevents the bus from moving even when in gear.

**Fixing brakes** A semi-truck driver was killed while working on his front brakes at a truck stop. The driver asked another driver to get in and start the engine, while he was still underneath the vehicle. The transmission was engaged, and turning the starter caused the truck to lurch forward. The front tire ran over the driver.



Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation

503-494-2502 [www.ohsu.edu/croet/face](http://www.ohsu.edu/croet/face)

