

Fatal Alert

On July 28, 2014 an employee was crushed by an excavator during a road construction project. The crew was engaged in the installation of a 24 inch irrigation pipe across a two lane road way that had been restricted to a single lane with traffic control. The excavator was equipped with a dozer type blade and the operator was moving forward and backwards using the blade to push dirt from the trench into a pile to be loaded in a truck with the boom bucket on the machine. The worker who died on this day had finished sweeping dirt and rocks from the roadway on the North side of the trench and then crossed over to the South side of the trench where the excavator was still in operation. The victim had made one sweep with the broom and stood behind the excavator in a blind spot of the operator's and was looking towards the traffic. The excavator started to move backwards and the track caught the right rear foot of the worker and continued up to his chest area. The worker died on site from injuries sustained.

Significant Factors

- The worker and the operator had worked together for approximately two years.
- The worker entered the area where the excavator was in operation, without notifying or ensuring the operator was aware of his presence.
- Backup alarms were operational on the excavator.
- The accident happened in the 11th hour of a 12 hour or longer work day.

Recommendations

- Ensure employees are trained to recognize and avoid hazards associated with the work being done.
- Install OSHA compliant danger signs on the rear of excavators to warn of swinging counterweight and crushing hazards.
- Install rearview cameras on excavators or proximity alarms so the operator can be alerted to objects to the rear of the machine.
- Provide for more breaks for employees during long work days.