

FATAL ALERT

On December 19, 2012, an employee working for a well service company was “run over” by a tractor/trailer being prepped to be moved to a loading area. At the time of the accident, the employee was in the process of attempting to “break loose” the frozen brake lines on the trailer. During this time the tractor remained running and was in high idle, the automatic transmission was in drive and there were no wheel chocks in use. The employee “crawled” under the rear axles of the trailer and was attempting to remove ice evidenced by a hammer and large pieces of dirty ice where the rear axles of the trailer would have been when parked and where drag marks started.

As there were no witnesses to the accident, it was determined by the condition of the scene that the employee had crawled under the trailer and was attempting to remove ice and other frozen material from the brake system of the rear dual wheels of the trailer. The employee did not turn off the vehicle or engage the brakes for the tractor/trailer. While attempting to “break loose” the brakes, the tractor/trailer started rolling forward. The employee was then caught under the trailer axles and dragged approximately 100 feet. At this point, the tractor hit a large dumpster causing the tractor and trailer to shift to the left. Approximately 20 feet further the employees clothing came in contact with the passenger side rear dual wheels of the trailer and pulled the employee into the wheels. This resulted in the trailers passenger side rear dual wheels to “run over” the employee, causing the employee’s death. The tractor/trailer continued forward for approximately another 150 feet where it hit a railroad car parked on a side track within the facility yard. Post-accident analysis show the procedures that were being used were inadequate due to the fact that the tractor was left running in high idle, the brakes were not set, and there were no other safety precautions being utilized.

Significant Factors

- The tractor/trailer had been connected and the tractor left running in high idle.
- The brakes were not set on the tractor/trailer.
- The automatic transmission was left in drive.
- There were no wheel chocks being utilized.
- The employee had “crawled” under the trailer without observing any lock out/tag out procedures.
- There were no other safety measures being utilized.
- Complacency. Employee had worked for the company for 20 years performing the same job.

Recommendations

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Train/retrain all employees to recognize related hazards in their work places.
- Insure all personnel are trained in and practice adequate Lockout/Tagout procedures.
- Insure all personnel are trained in and practice good “Walk Around Procedures” and the use of chocks for blocking wheels.
- Complete a hazards assessment for like activities as other factors impact the operations.