FATAL ALERT

September 25, 2007

On Tuesday September 25, 2007, at approximately 1715 hours, a 21 year old female road construction worker was fatally injured when she was backed over by a road grader. The deceased worker was a roller operator and was waiting for the grader operator to finish grading road base material before she continued her roller process. While waiting, she parked and exited her roller and assumed a position behind and to the outside where the grader was working. There was another employee picking up rocks and large clumps from the newly dumped material prior to being graded in the same area.

The deceased employee was standing behind and to the side of the grader and had her back to the grader. On prior backup passes, the grader operator moved away from the ground employees. On the fatal backup pass, the operator changed directions and backed up in the direction of the two employees. With her back to the grader, the female employee was struck and run over by the two left rear tires of the road grader.

Significant Factors

- Back up warning device (alarm) not operating
- Very strong wind noise
- Vehicular traffic noise on Interstate Highway
- Grader operator changing directions while making back up passes
- Grader operator failed to check area behind him prior to backing up
- Left hand outside mirror not adjusted to see left side of grader
- Employee working in close proximity to heavy equipment with her back to equipment
- Victim was wearing stocking cap and earmuffs
- Grader operator’s safety practices were questionable

Recommendations

- All employees should be briefed on the facts and circumstances of this fatal accident.
- All equipment must be taken out of service until all safety warning devices (alarms & lights) are operating properly
- Written procedures must be developed and available for all employees standing or working around moving equipment
- Training must be conducted and standard operating procedures established relating to back up operations
- All mirrors must be properly adjusted prior to vehicles being moved
- Employees should be trained to never have their back to moving/running equipment
- Train operators to follow manufacturer’s directions on operating equipment to follow all safety recommendations. (Ensure all safety devices are properly working, to watch for employees in vicinity and to follow recommended speeds when working around other equipment/employees)
- All unsafe acts should be documented and appropriate steps taken to prevent such actions from reoccurring.
- Employer and employees need to follow company safety policies.
- Mechanics must document repairs and give final approval prior to equipment going back into service
- A competent person must inspect equipment daily prior to use