Hard Hats Fatality File



A construction worker removes his hard hat because he is too warm. An engineer refuses to wear head protection, as she has “never been hurt before.” A utility worker thinks hard hats make him look silly and removes his every chance he gets.

Head injuries can result in traumatic brain injuries and death.

Employee Is Killed When Struck By Vehicle

Employee #1, a soil technician for a utility company, was monitoring the laying of water pipes in various excavated trenches that were located along a dead-end road with very little traffic. His primary duties were to monitor the trench sides and observe the excavated trench, checking the bedding conditions (i.e., depth and compaction of soil). All employees were issued hard hats and were required to wear work boots but were not provided with safety vests to wear when working near roads and around moving construction vehicles. Further, no specific training was administered for employees who work around moving vehicles and along roadways. Employee #1 was not wearing a hard hat or safety vest and had ear plugs donned. A case-loader operator connected the forks attachment to the front of a 1990, Case 621, front-end loader with license #4E07811. The vehicle’s wheels were 55 inches off of the ground and the distance from the operator’s platform in the cab to the ground was 62.75 inches. Also, the operator’s seat was 19 inches above the cab floor. The operator picked up two loads of pipes that were to be laid. As the operator placed the loads, along the road, in their designated locations, and the last pipe was dropped off, the operator noticed that Employee #1 had walked to within 12 to 15 feet from the roadway, when he had previously been approximately 40 feet from the roadway. The loader began backing up, using a back-up alarm. The loader traveled about 75 feet when the operator realized that Employee #1 had moved and was located directly behind the loader. The operator attempted to utilize the brakes, but the loader struck Employee #1 after traveling 80 feet. Employee #1 was knocked down and his head hit the ground. Emergency services were called, and Employee #1 was transported to a shock trauma unit, where his lower right leg was amputated, and he was treated for multiple facial and head fractures. Employee #1 died five days later due to possible heart attack or internal trauma. A detailed investigation revealed that the front cab of the loader was cracked; the right window was muddy and cracked; the left window was muddy; and there were not side-view mirrors present. Additionally, the loaders exhaust pipe created a blind spot, and no spotter was assigned to assist the operator while backing was in progress.