

Hitching – Drawbar Connection Fatality File



Orchard Laborer Dies after Being Struck and Run Over by Dump Trailer, Washington

A 49-year-old orchard worker was fatally injured when he was struck and run over by a dump trailer that became unhitched from a tractor. At the time of the incident, the operator of the tractor was pulling the trailer up the side of a rough, steep dirt orchard road. The victim and another worker were loading the trailer with rocks that were excavated from the orchard rows. The victim went behind the trailer, as it was moving, to pick up rocks from the ground. The tractor started to lose traction, causing the trailer to hop. The hopping motion caused the trailer coupler to unhitch from the trailer hitch ball. The trailer rolled down the sloped road, and struck and ran over the victim. Emergency medical services were contacted and arrived on the scene. The victim was transported to the hospital where he was put on life support. Approximately two days after being admitted the victim was taken off life support and passed away. Following the incident, investigators noted that the trailer hitch ball on the tractor was not the proper size for the trailer coupler, and the safety chains and other safety equipment were not properly connected or not functioning.