

TOOLBOX TALK #38

OPERATOR CRUSHED LOADING BACKHOE ONTO TRAILER

A 64-year-old truck driver and equipment operator working for a gravel-hauling and equipment-moving company drove his employer's truck with an attached flatbed trailer to a jobsite. His task was to load a backhoe and transport it to another site.

Although no one witnessed the incident, a backup warning alarm was sounding when first responders arrived, suggesting the driver was operating the backhoe in reverse. It's possible the driver had started moving the backhoe up the trailer's two metal ramps, then backed up to better position its wheels.



As he was doing this, the wet, muddy tires may have slipped on the ramps, resulting in a rear wheel going off a ramp and causing the backhoe to roll over on its side. The driver either attempted to jump from the operator's seat or was thrown from it.

He was crushed under the backhoe's rollover protective structure and died. The backhoe had a seatbelt that, if used, would have kept the driver in the seat and within the protective structure as the equipment rolled.

To help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Train equipment operators and ensure they always use a seat belt, including when loading and unloading onto a transport trailer.
- Use a spotter to provide directions to the equipment operator during loading and unloading to ensure the operator positions equipment correctly for safe movement on and off the trailer.
- Create a job hazard analysis for safely moving construction equipment.