

TOOLBOX TALK #28

OPERATOR DIES IN ZERO-TURN MOWER ACCIDENT

A 57-year-old equipment operator was killed while mowing grass at a municipality-owned pump station. As he turned the zero-turn mower he was riding on to his left, it struck a rock that was covered by vegetation. The mower overturned and pinned the operator to the ground. A driver passing by noticed the overturned mower, stopped and called emergency medical services. The victim was transported to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The medical examiner listed the cause of death as traumatic asphyxia. The employer was a municipal department of public works for a Massachusetts town. At the time of the incident, the department had no comprehensive safety and health program.

To help prevent similar incidents:

- Ensure riding mower operators use rollover protective systems and wear seat belts.
- Routinely perform a Job Safety Analysis before beginning mowing.
- Ensure riding mowers aren't operated on slopes where the angle exceeds the maximum slope specified by the manufacturer.
- Routinely provide employees with training on the equipment they are asked to use.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive safety and health program that addresses hazard recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions.
- Consider developing policies that prevent employees from working alone when performing certain tasks.