

TOOLBOX TALK #42

TRUCK DRIVER CRUSHED BY CARDBOARD BALE

A 47-year-old truck driver died after delivering 1500-pound bales of recycled cardboard to a paper production mill. The driver had worked for his employer, a transportation company, for 10 years and was actively involved in the company's safety program and training new employees.



On the day of the incident, the bales were loaded into the driver's semitrailer at his employer's yard. The bales were stacked three high and aligned with the center of the fully loaded trailer. When the driver arrived at the loading dock at the delivery site, he opened the trailer door on the passenger side and chained it to the side of the trailer to keep it open. He then opened the driver's side door of the trailer, which was parked on uneven ground. As he opened the door, a stack of bales became unstable and two bales fell out of the trailer. One bale struck the driver and came to rest on him. He died of blunt force injuries to the torso.

Investigators found that the employer provided straps to prevent bales from falling out when drivers open trailer doors, but the driver did not use them.

To help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Ensure drivers are protected from falling bales.
- When bales are loaded into trailers, ensure they are properly secured and will not fall over during transport or when drivers open trailer doors.
- Provide and require drivers to use cargo securement devices such as straps.
- Ensure drivers park trucks and trailers on level ground before opening trailer doors.
- Ensure drivers unlock and open one trailer door at a time and shield themselves from falling bales by standing behind the door.