

News Release

9 October 2009

Farm worker escapes death.

WorkSafe has issued a number of safety improvement notices calling for improved training and work practices after a farm worker was run over by a tractor on a Werribee South vegetable farm this morning.

The man suffered serious injuries to his pelvis and was flown to hospital.

Workers on a platform at the back of the tractor were planting broccoli seedlings.

The man who was hurt took the empty seedling trays and was putting them in containers on the front of the moving tractor when he was run over.

It's the second serious farm safety incident this week.

On Tuesday a Lower Templestowe man, 47, died from crushing injuries after a tractor he was driving became entangled in a steel wire supporting poles for a canopy over a Wandin North orchard.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt said the man hurt today was lucky to be alive and that the incident reinforced the need for farmers, labour hire firms and farm workers to ensure high safety standards were maintained.

Six of Victoria's 20 work-related deaths this year have happened on farms.

"Farms can be great places to live and work, but they can be our most dangerous," Mr Merritt said.

"Powerful and unforgiving equipment, working in isolation, relying on years or decades of experience environmental conditions and the terrain can all lead to tragedy.

"In the wake of this week's incidents, farm employers and workers need to review their work practices.

"Fixing these issues before someone is hurt is a lot better than a knee-jerk reaction after the event."

Work Safe Week events are being held across regional Victoria and Melbourne from 26 – 30 October. To see events near you or activities touching on your industry go to www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/worksafeweek.

WorkSafe publications are available online along with information about particular risks, industries and occupations at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or call WorkSafe's advisory service on 1800 136 089.

Small businesses can sign up for a WorkSafe-funded free and independent three-hour consultancy. Details at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/smallbusiness.

Other farm deaths this year:

14 January: A 58 year old male employee died in hospital after falling from his horse while shifting cattle on a road.

21 February: A boy under 2 years of age was run over by a tractor at Creswick when he fell out of the bucket attached to the front of the tractor.

26 March: A West Gippsland farmer died in hospital after rolling his quad bike down an embankment.

29 March: An 82 year old male (farm owner) rolled his tractor down an embankment.

12 May: An 86 year old male suffered fatal crush injuries when he tried to get on to his tractor when it started to roll away from him after he had got off the tractor at Dollar in South Gippsland.

6 October: A Lower Templestowe man, 47, died from crushing injuries after a tractor he was driving became entangled in a steel wire supporting poles for a canopy over a Wandin North orchard.

WorkSafe media inquiries only: Michael Birt 0411 256 605.