Backhoe Jumps Forward And Crushes Laborer

A backhoe in poor repair could only be started by using a screwdriver to engage the starter. Besides its inoperable starter button, the backhoe had a broken safety catch on the gear shift. In addition, the emergency parking brake did not work. These defects all contributed to the death of a construction laborer.

A crew of three had been trenching and excavating in preparation for a new sewer line. When the backhoe operator activated the starter, the machine lurched forward and struck the laborer. He died of crushing injuries.

The company employing this crew was cited for failing to train employees to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions and for failing to identify defective equipment. When equipment is defective, it must be tagged and removed from service or the controls must be locked so the machine cannot be operated.