Changing Crops During Drought Fatality File

Farmworker dies in Willamette Valley record heat

A farmworker died Saturday at a workplace in St. Paul as temperatures in the area that day topped 104 degrees.

Aaron Corvin, a spokesperson for Oregon OSHA, said in an email the agency has opened investigations into Brother Farm Labor Contractor and Ernst Nursery and Farms. The employee who died was working on a crew moving irrigation lines, Corvin said. Officials have not yet identified the person.

Ernst Nursery and Farms did not respond to calls seeking comment Tuesday and Wednesday. Speaking in Spanish, Andres Pablo Lucas, owner of Brother Farm Labor Contractor, declined to comment to the Statesman Journal Wednesday.

Pablo Lucas told the Associated Press that the man arrived to the U.S. from Guatemala a few months ago. When a group of workers gathered after noon on Saturday, they noticed someone was missing. They began searching and found his body. Pablo Lucas said he didn’t remember the man’s name.

St. Paul Fire District Chief Bryan Lee said the agency dispatched a team at 3:37 p.m. Saturday after a call reporting a medical emergency in the 7600 block of Champoeg Road NE. A middle-aged male was found unresponsive and not breathing.

He was taken to Providence Newberg Medical Center after emergency responders performed CPR and ALS treatment for their standard 30 minutes, Lee said. He was declared dead at the hospital.

Corvin said the investigations may take three to four months to complete, and the results will be available to the public. The

agency does not discuss the status or details of ongoing investigations, he said.

Corvin said the agency was not aware of any other fatalities that may have been heat-related.

A review of Oregon and federal OSHA databases on workplace fatalities indicates this was the first reported work-related heat death of a farmworker in Oregon in at least the past two decades, which is as far back as the database goes.

At least two workers in construction and logging died of heat-related illness in Oregon in the past 19 years, according to the databases.