Excavator Operator Crushed

A 64-year-old operator was running an excavator in British Columbia. He was working alone, moving logs to build a cabin. To lift the logs, he was using a hook and a cable attached to the bucket of an excavator.

Each log had ropes attached to each end, which the excavator operator used to control each log and swing it into position. There was no window glass on the excavator, and the worker ran the ropes in through the front window.

There was also no metal grate guarding the side of the cab nearest the excavator boom. So when the operator had to reposition a rope, he leaned out of the side window. At the same time, he accidentally moved the hydraulic boom control lever. The boom dropped down and crushed the operator's head between the lifting cylinder and the cab.

No machine of any kind should be operated with guards missing. They're there to protect you. Guards keep you from being pinched, crushed or cut by, or even pulled into, machinery. Treat them with the respect they deserve.

Working alone is dangerous. If you have to work away from others, make sure to arrange a communication link so you have someone to call for help. And whether you have a communication link or not, have a co-worker check on you every halfhour. This could save your life.

Source: Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, Health & Safety Report Vol. 3, Issue 4, April 2005