Farmer Dies in Corn Husker

A 27-year-old farmer was pulling a picking machine through a cornfield with a tractor. Rollers grabbed the corn stalks and stripped off the ears. The ears then moved toward a set of husking rollers, which operated like an old-fashioned clothes wringer, squeezing the husks off the corn and sending the corn into a towed wagon.

The farmer noticed a problem. He stopped the tractor but left the engine running, without disengaging the power take-off that ran the corn husker. Then he reached into the husking roller area to clear some jammed cornstalks.

His coat sleeve caught between two rollers. He tried to free himself with his other hand, but it also became caught. The rollers pulled his arms into the machine, jamming his neck and chest tightly against the frame.

A neighbor noticed the machine sitting still for a long time, motors running. He found the farmer and called for help on his cell phone. Rescuers found the farmer dead at the scene.

The farmer should have shut off the husker power take-off and tractor engine, and also removed his key before getting off of his tractor. He should not have been wearing loose-fitting clothing near moving machines and should not have reached into the husker while it was running. The victim could have avoided his fatal injury by following all safety precautions for power take-off equipment.

Source: Minnesota Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 06MN009