Hitching Mishap Kills Child

The 12-year-old victim was the farmer’s nephew. He’d been helping bale hay on his uncle’s 700-acre farm. A wagon, without brakes and piled high with hay bales, was parked on what seemed to be level ground, without wheel chocks.

The boy jumped from the truck to hitch the wagon as the farmer reversed his one-ton truck into position in front of it. When the boy lifted the wagon’s tongue, the wagon slowly rolled forward. The boy apparently didn’t realize his head was directly between the truck’s metal bed and the wagon’s edge. He may have been too busy trying to drop the hitch into place.

When the farmer suddenly couldn’t see the boy he went to find him. He found his nephew in a pool of blood, slumped over the wagon hitch, which had plowed into the ground. The boy died instantly.

Any vehicle without brakes must be immobilized in some other way. Chocks or stakes in the ground can be used, or the wheels could be spragged with logs or chains. The boy should not have been between the vehicles while the truck was moving. Any system that required the boy and the farmer to be out of each other’s sight for even a moment was too dangerous.

Source: Iowa Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 04IA017