Snow Blower Safety Fatality File

63 Year Old Mechanic Pulled into Snow Thrower at Ski Resort

The victim was working alone at the time of the incident and there was no witness. At approximately 8:15 pm, two co-workers went to the garage to look for the victim after receiving a phone call from the victim's wife who reported that he had not come home. When they arrived at the garage, they saw the victim's pick up truck parked outside the garage door, the garage door opened 12 inches, and the victim caught in the auger of the snow thrower. The engine of the snow thrower was stalled. It appeared that the victim had tried to move the snow thrower out of the garage. He started the engine, engaged the PTO, got off the tractor, and positioned himself between the garage door and the auger to open the door. The clearance between the door and the auger was 14.5 inches. His flannel shirt was caught by the rotating auger and he was pulled into it. The victim did not receive any training on how to operate the snow thrower, nor was he authorized to operate or move the machine. The local emergency rescue squad responded and arrived on site within ten minutes. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The Medical Examiner reported in the toxicology report that the victim's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was 0.12%. The legal limit of BAC for operating motor vehicles in New York State is 0.08%.

New York State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (NY FACE) investigators recommend the following measures to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, employers should:

- ensure that all snow removal equipment is equipped with operator-presence controls that are functioning properly.
- ensure that any equipment taken out of service for repair or

service is locked out and tagged out and carries a warning sign.

- ensure that all snow throwers have warning signs to alert operators or maintenance staff of the life-threatening consequences of working on or near a snow thrower without disconnecting the power to the impeller and auger.
- provide safety training to both operators and maintenance employees who work with snow removal equipment; and
- address the issues related to drug and alcohol in workplace through enforcing a clearly defined company policy.