Stump Grinders – Landscaping Fatality File

Fatal Stump Grinder Accident in Landscaping

On September 15, 2023, a tragic accident involving a stump grinder occurred during a commercial landscaping project in Portland, Oregon, resulting in the death of a 43-year-old landscaping worker, Thomas Blake. Blake was operating a high-powered diesel stump grinder to remove a large tree stump on a residential property when the incident occurred.

According to the investigation, Blake was using the stump grinder when the machine’s safety shield failed, causing wood debris to be ejected at high speed. The forceful impact of the debris caused severe injuries. Despite the immediate efforts of his coworkers and emergency medical services, Blake succumbed to his injuries on-site.

The investigation identified several contributing factors, including the malfunction of the safety shield, inadequate maintenance of the stump grinder, and the lack of proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Following this incident, the landscaping company has implemented stricter safety protocols, including regular equipment maintenance checks, mandatory use of PPE such as face shields and protective clothing, and comprehensive training sessions for all operators on the safe use of stump grinders.