Tractor Safety Fatality File

Farmer Killed While Bypass-Starting His Tractor

A 67-year-old farmer was killed while trying to bypass start his tractor. The farmer was transporting bales of hay to a field when the tractor stopped and would not restart. The farmer went to the barn where his wife was working and together, they drove their pickup truck to the tractor. The farmer stood between the tractor and the truck, connected the jumper cables, and then touched a metal wrench to the starter to bypass the ignition. When the engine started, the tractor moved forward and ran over him. He died later that day.

Bypass-starting bypasses all safety start and neutral start switches engineered in the tractor’s electrical and hydraulic systems. If the tractor is left in gear and a bypass start is performed, the starter will engage as soon as the circuit is complete, and the tractor will start moving. The operator does not have enough time to jump away and may be injured or killed by the tractor. When starting a tractor, the farmer should remain in the tractor seat, with the transmission and power take-off in neutral and the brake engaged. The manufacturer’s recommendations for safe Startup should be followed. These procedures should be marked by decals on the tractor. In order to prevent incidents, such as unintentional movement, the tractor should always be shut down correctly when not in use. Farmers should periodically check all operating and safety systems of the tractor and repair or replace them as necessary.