Victim Dies Under Tractor

The 50-year-old victim was part owner of a motocross track that operated out of a sand pit in New Jersey. The sand was frequently rutted from motorcycle tires, so the track was groomed several times per week by dragging a steel I-beam around the track, attached to a farm tractor.

The track had no full-time employees and there was no safety program in place, although the owners employed a medical emergency technician whenever the track was in use.

According to the OSHA investigation, the victim had driven up a 10-foot, roughly 22-degree hillock when the I-beam became embedded in loose sandy soil, and the tractor's wheels began to spin and bog down.

The track's other owner speculated that the victim might have "goosed the throttle" or popped the clutch to get moving again. Unfortunately, the stuck I-beam pulled on the rear of the tractor, causing the front wheels to rise off the ground, and the tractor flipped backwards. The steering wheel crushed the victim's chest. The victim's wife called paramedics, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

The tractor involved in this incident was almost 50 years old and had no roll cage protection. All vehicles should be retrofitted with a superstructure to defend against rollovers, and all operators should wear seatbelts. Employers should conduct periodic job hazard assessments so that hazards such as the one that caused this fatality don't go unnoticed.

Source: New Jersey Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 03NJ093