Agriculture & Landscaping: Machinery, Terrain and Weather Risks Fatality File



Worker Dies from Heat Stroke While Operating Lawn Equipment

At about 6:30 am, on May 26, 2010, Employee #1 of Acres Enterprises, Inc., was assigned to a crew that was dispatched to mow lawn in a residential complex in Joliet, Illinois. No training was given to Employee #1 before dispatch into the field because, according to the employer, Employee #1, a new employee, claimed to have had 9 years of experience in landscaping. The foremen in charge of the crew attempted to train Employee #1 in the use of the lawn mower, but Employee #1 refused the training claiming he had much experience, thus no training was given by the foremen to Employee #1 before he started work. According to the foremen and another employee, Employee #1 drank one gallon of water and two 8oz bottles of Gatorade during lawn mowing operations in the morning, before lunch. Employee #1 was operating a Toro Proline 48 self propelled walk behind mower under the sun in temperatures above 90 (F). Employee #1 took a 10 minute break and a 20 minute break before lunch, per his co-workers statements. According to his co-workers, Employee #1 drank additional water during his half hour lunch, but refused to eat his lunch because of stomach pain. Employee #1 had been working in the hot weather and drank approximately one half gallon of water after lunch when he was observed acting irrationally around 2:30 pm. According to his co-workers, he was taken to a shade under a tree when he collapsed while sitting down. He was taken by ambulance some 5 minutes later to Provena Saint Joseph Hospital and admitted with a body core temperature of 108 (F). Two days later Employee #1 was pronounced dead in the hospital. Subsequent autopsy and lab analysis confirmed the cause of death as multiple organ failure due to heat stroke. Acres Group had a heat stress training program in place but lacked an acclimation work regimen for their employees.

Source: *Osha.gov*