Language barrier contributed to crushing death



A landscaper who did not speak English was crushed to death as he and a co-worker attempted to unload a backhoe for a day’s work. The man, an undocumented immigrant, spoke only Spanish and may not have understood verbal safety instructions provided to him.

The incident occurred as the man and a co-worker were unloading a backhoe from a trailer used to transport it to the home they were to landscape that day. The chains used to attach the backhoe to the trailer had tightened during transport. The co-worker climbed onto the backhoe and moved it forward slightly to provide some slack. He was getting off the backhoe to help unfasten the chains when the machine lurched forward, pinning him against the truck.

The co-worker reversed the machine quickly; however the victim died a short time later from abdominal injuries.

Training should be provided in an employee’s primary language. Make sure you are providing training that all employees can understand. Complete a thorough job hazard analysis before each new job task.