Worker Falls Under Truck Wheels



A recycling collector on the job for just six months was run over and killed by the new recycling truck his fellow worker was driving. The 26-year-old victim and two co-workers were collecting recyclable household materials such as bottles and cans. The crewmembers were working their usual route when they came to a dead end and needed to back up in order to access another street. The victim exited the truck to “ground guide” the driver. As the truck began moving forward again, he tried to jump back into the truck, standing on the passenger-side step and seizing two handles near the cab door. Somehow he fell to the ground, and was run over and trapped underneath a tire. The driver backed the truck off the victim and called 911, but his injuries were too severe and he died in hospital later that morning.

More than half of all workplace fatalities related to recycling collection take place around moving trucks. Pressure to get the route finished quickly can lead to safety falling by the wayside.

This victim might have lived if he’d been trained to use the new recycling truck properly. Most of the employer’s trucks were equipped with riding steps for the collectors to stand on between pickups, but the step on the new truck was intended for entering and exiting only. To prevent future incidents, employees should be trained in the safe use of all new equipment they use. Such training would be facilitated by conducting a thorough job hazard analysis when new equipment is put into service.

Source: New Jersey Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 05NJ077