

Hazard Alert Stresses Use of Seatbelts



- An experienced equipment operator was loading a bulldozer onto a tilt-up float. The dozer's tracks started to spin, it shifted and flipped over. The operator fell out of the cab and was killed by the dozer as it rolled onto its side.
- An equipment operator was driving a forklift when he lost control of it. The forklift went off the road and toppled down a steep bank. The driver was thrown from the forklift and killed when it rolled on top of him.
- A heavy equipment operator began to move a vibrator compactor forward on uneven ground. He was thrown from the unit when it flipped over on a slope, suffering fatal chest injuries.
- This past June, a 19-year-old worker was killed when his forklift collided with another forklift. He was ejected and the forklift fell on top of him.

What do these tragedies have in common? In each case, the victim wasn't wearing his seatbelt—and if he had been, it might have saved his life. These examples all happen to come from New Brunswick but similar tragedies are all too common across Canada.

Because of such incidents, WorkSafeNB recently issued a hazard alert reminding workers that seatbelts save lives.

The alert explains that the fact that powered mobile equipment has a rollover protective structure (ROPS) doesn't mean that a seatbelt isn't needed. In fact, in the examples above, the equipment *had* such structures yet workers still died.

These safety measures are designed to work together. That is, in the event of a rollover, the ROPS will act as a protective box around the worker while the seatbelt keeps him inside the box. (The OHS Insider has more information on protecting workers from rollovers.)

Bottom line: The best measure workers can take to avoid injury or death in the event of a rollover or a collision is to wear their seatbelt.

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- Using seatbelts
- Forklift safety in general.