



Preventing Worker Injuries and Deaths as a Result of the Use of Leaf Collection Vacuuming Equipment



Public Employee Alert # 28 Safety & Health Bulletin ATTENTION: All Public Employers

February 2004

This notice is being sent as a **WARNING** due to several fatalities that have occurred over the last several years involving the use of leaf collection equipment.

Please Ensure that this Warning and the Safe Practices below are Shared With All Operational Personnel

WARNING!
Workers risk possible injury or death when operating on or near leaf collection vacuuming equipment.

In December of 1997, a municipal road worker was killed when he was run over by the rear wheels of a leaf vacuuming truck. The victim was working beside the truck using a vacuum hose to suck up the leaves that were placed at curbside at a municipal residence. The victim's coworker was driving the truck up a hill and felt a "bump." After stopping the truck, the driver discovered that the victim had been run over by the rear wheels.

In November of 2003, a municipal public works employee was killed when he was run over by the wheels of a portable leaf collection vacuum trailer. The victim was riding on the yoke of the portable leaf vacuum as the driver was turning onto a side street. The vacuum hose swung loose, hitting several parked cars. The tow driver felt a "thump" and brought the vehicle to a stop. After stopping the truck, the driver found the victim who had been run over by the rear wheels of the vacuum. It is believed that the victim was attempting to retrieve and secure the swinging vacuum hose, lost his footing and fell from the yoke. Upon inspection of the municipal public works department, another similar type of leaf collection vacuum was discovered that was missing the warning labels which instructed individuals not to ride on the yoke of the trailer. Additionally, diamond plate had been welded onto the yoke of the trailer. It is presumed that the diamond plate had been welded onto the yoke to provide better footing for an individual to ride on it. The employer stated that they were unaware of these violations and upon being made aware by the inspector immediately took steps to abate the violations by adding the appropriate warning labels to the yoke and removing the diamond plate.

To Prevent Future Incidents of this Type, Employers Should:

- Follow all manufacturer's recommendations for the safe operation of leaf vacuuming equipment.
- Make no modifications to any equipment, unless authorized by the manufacturer.
- Make sure that warning labels are not removed or altered. Contact the manufacturer to obtain replacement labels.
- Enforce all safe operating practices, such as keeping vacuum operators in clear view at all times.
- Provide employees with and ensure the use of all personal protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer.
- Thoroughly train all new employees prior to allowing them to operate any piece of equipment.
- Due to the extended time frames over which many communities perform leaf collection, reinforce safety training at regular intervals.



Improperly Modified Yoke

Safe Work Practices Save Lives

Additional Occupational Safety and Health alerts can be obtained at our web site:

www.state.nj.us/labor/lsspeosh.html

For additional information on Public Employee Safety and Health Contact:

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Health Issues

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