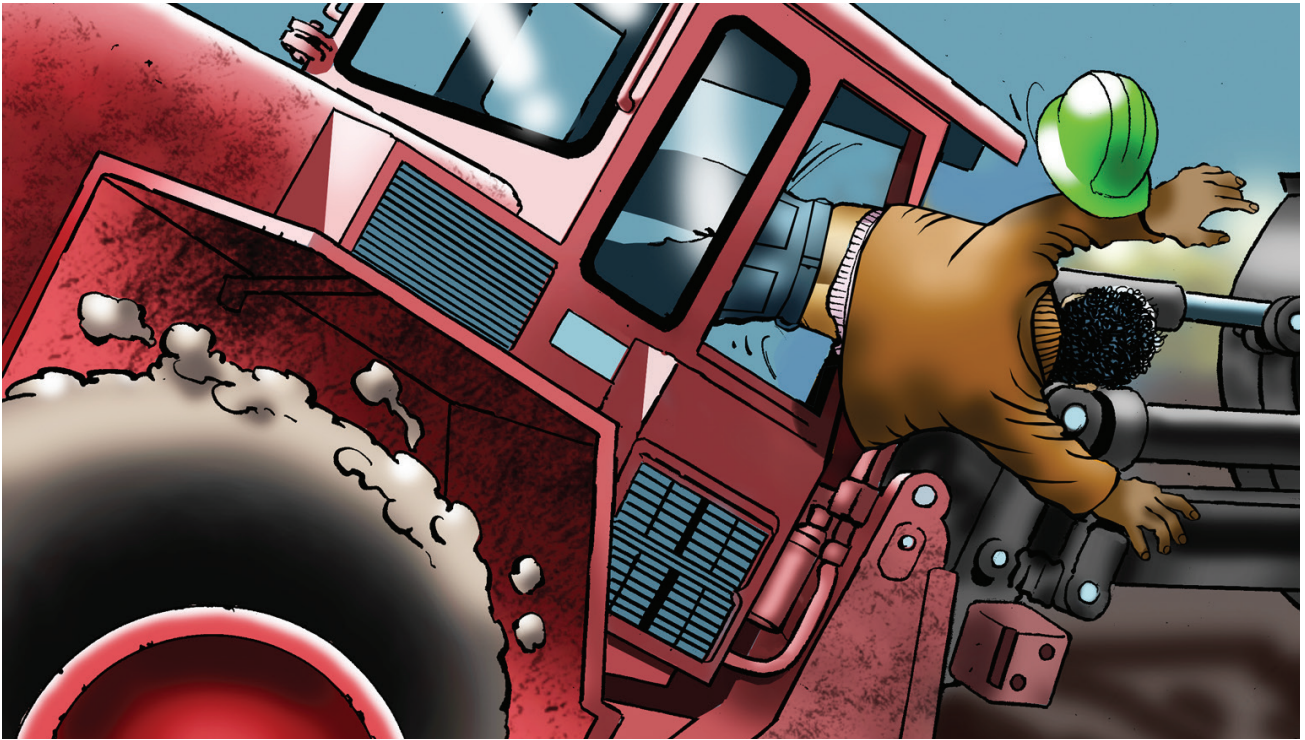


Downhill disaster



After refueling his wheel loader at the top of a hill, an operator began a steep ride down to where the work was taking place.

As the wheel loader picked up speed, the operator hit the brake pedals, but the brakes failed to engage. The loader hit a bump on the descent and began bucking violently back and forth. Other workers at the site reported seeing the operator bouncing around inside the cab. As the loader proceeded down the slope, it gained even more speed and the operator was thrown from the cab either through the front of the ROPS or the side.

The loader continued to the bottom of the hill where it struck an excavator and stopped. The

operator was found pinned under the driver side rear tire and was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

Investigators believe the operator was not wearing a seat belt. Prior to the accident, he had been warned to use his seat belt after he had failed to do so in a skidder rollover. The operator was trained to run a skid loader and had some training on the wheel loader but at the time of the accident, he had not completed a performance test.

The loader was 12 to 15 years old. Maintenance records indicated that new brake lines had been installed on the loader two months prior. Investigators later found the lines had not been replaced, but rather only repaired.

Take-aways

- All operators must wear seat belts. Operators who fail to use seat belts or use seat belt disabling devices should be reprimanded or fired.
- All machines should be equipped with interlocks making them impossible to start without the seat belt fastened.
- Maintenance of crucial items, such as brake lines, should never be done on the cheap. When brake lines or fittings leak, the entire length of the line or fitting should be replaced – not repaired – with the correct part.
- Operators should be trained and tested on new machines before being allowed to run them.

This Safety Watch was based on MIFACE Investigation Report #10MI038. For more details, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/face/pdfs/10MI038.pdf>



Date of safety talk: _____ Leader: _____
 Attending: _____