

## Werribee farm worker run over, dies

23 November 2009

A man has died at Werribee after being run over by the trailer of a reversing tractor in K Road\* Werribee.

WorkSafe is investigating today's incident which happened around 12.30pm.

WorkSafe's investigation is at an early stage, but it is understood the trailer, loaded with cabbages, was being reversed into a loading dock. He died at the scene.

With weeks to go before Christmas and just days after shooting of a new pre-Christmas workplace safety commercial ended, WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said today's incident sent a powerful message to all employers and workers.

"Do everything humanly possible to prevent incidents like this happening."

"In particular, with harvesting going on in many areas, it is essential that employers, contractors and labour hire firms ensure people are not put at risk.

"Employers must assume their legal responsibilities, put in place safe systems; ensure everyone knows about them and uses them.

"Separation of pedestrians and moving vehicles is essential.

"Without this approach the dangers of farm work are magnified, particularly at this time of year when farming activity is at a high level in many areas."

This year's workplace death toll is exceptionally high, in particular the number of people who have died on farms.

Standing at seven, farm deaths in 2009 are more than the past two years combined.

Today's incident is Victoria's third work-related death this month, the eighth since the start of October and the 26<sup>th</sup> this year.

"Apart from the deaths there are also many incidents where the person is simply lucky to be alive," Mr Merritt said.

On 8 October a farm worker was run over by a tractor on another Werribee South vegetable farm. He suffered serious injuries to his pelvis and was flown to hospital for surgery.

Mr Merritt said today's incident was a warning to other industries where a busy pre-Christmas period was looming.

"Whether you're in retail, hospitality or the transport industry and building-up to an end-of-year rush or construction & manufacturing and heading toward deadlines, the time to make safety improvements is before someone is hurt.

"This is a period where high risks abound. The last thing anyone needs at a busy time is to deal with a preventable crisis."

WorkSafe publications designed to help make workplaces safer are available online along with information about particular risks, industries and occupations at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) or call WorkSafe's advisory service on 1800 136 089.

Small businesses can sign up for a WorkSafe-funded free and independent three-hour consultancy. Details at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/smallbusiness](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/smallbusiness).

### **Other farm deaths this year:**

**14 January:** A 58 year old male employee died in hospital after falling from his horse while shifting cattle on a road.

**21 February:** A boy under 2 years of age was run over by a tractor at Creswick when he fell out of the bucket attached to the front of the tractor.

**29 March:** A West Gippsland farmer died in hospital after rolling his quad bike down an embankment.

**12 May:** An 86 year old male suffered fatal crush injuries when he tried to get on to his tractor when it started to roll away from him after he had got off the tractor at Dollar in South Gippsland.

**6 October:** A Lower Templestowe man, 47, died from crushing injuries after a tractor he was driving became entangled in a steel wire supporting poles for a canopy over a Wandin North orchard.

**12 October:** A 45 year old dairy farmer died near Portland when he was hit by his tractor and an implement and suffered fatal crushing injuries.