

# Potato Harvester



# Hazard Alert

## HAZARD SUMMARY

On October 3, 2014, a Prince Edward Island farm worker was seriously injured while carrying out maintenance on a potato harvester (Figure 1 and 4). A farmer and two workers were harvesting potatoes when the farmer noticed that the potato harvester needed to be repaired. The farmer stopped the harvester to repair a bent rod on the potato belt (Figure 2). Several other workers got off their equipment and gathered around the potato harvester to observe and assist with repairs. While the harvester was stopped, a worker climbed on the back of the potato harvester to clean the potato tops off the rollers. The farmer, unaware that the worker was cleaning the rollers, started the harvester to advance the belt. When the belt advanced, the worker's legs were pinned between the deviner chain and the rollers of the harvester (Figure 3). The worker suffered two broken legs.

## CAUSE

The following hazards were identified at the scene and may have contributed to the workplace injury:

- Lack of communication between the farmer and the worker
- Lack of training for the cleaning and maintenance of equipment in the field
- Due to the size of the potato harvester, there are several blind spots
- Workers not accounted for before starting the potato harvester
- Rushing to complete the repairs to the harvester
- Distraction from other workers not involved with equipment repair



Figure 1. Location of bent rod and injured worker on the potato harvester

## LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The following legislative requirements under PEI's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* relate to this hazard alert:

- Section 12 (1) (a) states, "An employer shall ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect the occupational health and safety of persons at or near the workplace."
- Section 12 (1) (c) states "An employer shall ensure that such information, instruction, training, supervision and facilities are provided as are necessary to ensure the occupational health and safety of the workers."

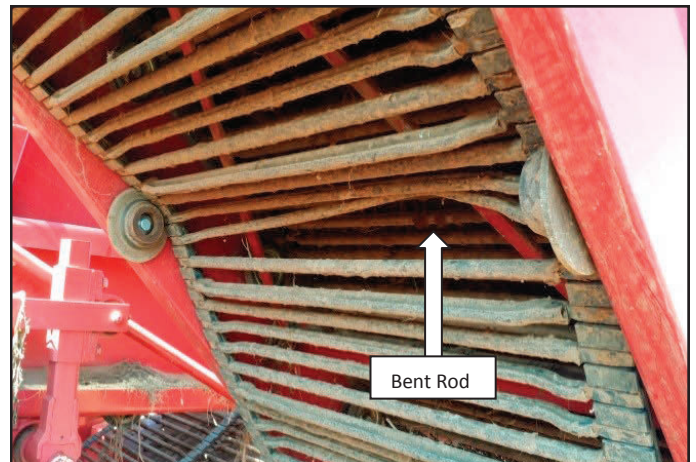


Figure 2. Bent rod of potato belt

To report a serious workplace incident or hazard,  
call the 24hr OHS Emergency Line at 902-628-7513

## RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS

- Harvesters should be safely parked, turned off and keys removed before any cleaning or servicing takes place.
- Once the equipment has been stopped, do not move the equipment until the operator or person designated by the operator: has walked around the equipment; is sure that everyone is accounted for; and is sure that no one is at risk.
- Follow safety rules and procedures at *all* times, even during busy harvesting seasons. Rushing can increase the risk of injuries.
- Ensure workers are adequately trained on how to clean and maintain equipment safely in the field.
- Ensure young and inexperienced workers are especially well-trained and supervised.
- Be mindful of workers' abilities and limitations, and assign tasks accordingly.
- Ensure each piece of equipment has a designated operator responsible for the safe operation of the equipment.
- Ensure all workers are aware of blind spots on the equipment.
- Use a pre-arranged signal such as sounding the horn before starting the harvester.
- Wear high visibility vests when working around moving equipment in the field.
- Enforce a "No Visitors " policy in the field in order to account for the safety of all workers present.
- Use extra caution at the end of a long shift to offset the effects of fatigue.

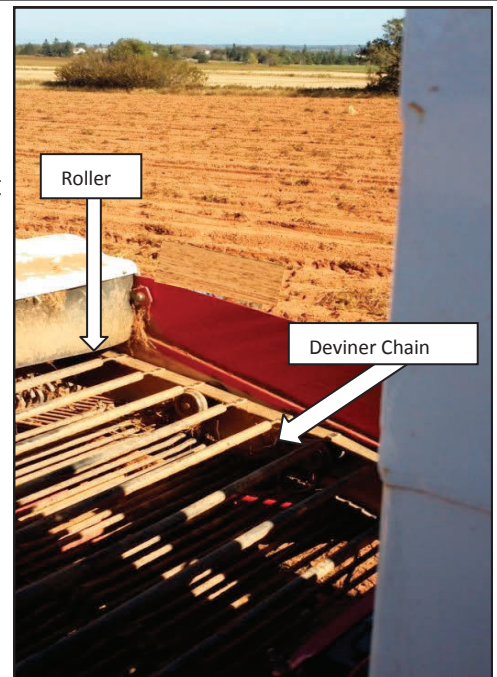


Figure 3. Top of potato harvester



Figure 4. Potato Harvester involved in the incident

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Workers Compensation Board website at [www.wcb.pe.ca](http://www.wcb.pe.ca) or contact the WCB Occupational Health & Safety Division at 902-368-5680 or 1-800-237-5049 (Toll free in Atlantic Canada).

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