A 34-year-old Canadian man was crushed to death by a piece of heavy machinery Friday morning, February 8, 2019 [Click here for accident link.]

The victim worked for a trucking company hauling trash to the landfill. He reportedly experienced problems with his vehicle and was being assisted by a piece of heavy equipment. While being assisted, the victim exited his vehicle without the knowledge of the operator and was crushed to death by his vehicle when it was moved by the heavy equipment.

This is a tragic fatality, which highlights the need to conduct Safety Briefings prior to performing out-of-the ordinary tasks and to follow proper procedures for towing stuck trucks.

Below are some general guidelines for Pulling or Towing Stuck Equipment or Trucks

First... Ask the question: Is it the site’s responsibility to tow the stuck vehicle? What is the situation? Is it a mechanical issue that should be handled by a 3rd party wrecker, or is the vehicle stuck in mud due to site conditions? If unsure, or the situation feels unsafe, stop the task and contact a supervisor!

Safety Briefing and Communicating with the Driver of the Stuck Vehicle
- A Safety Briefing should be conducted including everyone involved in the towing process
- Consider requiring the driver/representative of the stuck vehicle/hauler to sign a liability waiver
- Operator/driver is responsible for hooking and unhooking the cable/sling to their equipment
- Eye contact must be maintained between the operators/drivers of both pieces of equipment. If visual contact is not possible, a radio or another person must be used
- If a Traffic Director is used make sure he/she is in a safe zone
- The towing equipment is only to apply power after receiving the “go ahead” sign from the stuck operator/driver or other person assisting in the towing process
- Only cables/slings appropriately sized, rated and designed for towing should be used, which must be inspected prior to each use

Towing Procedure, hooking the vehicle – Forward or Backward
- Position towing equipment in front of, or behind the stuck vehicle at a distance less than the length of the cable/sling, while maintaining a safe distance between vehicles
- Lower all attachments, set parking brake. Use caution on icy surfaces
- After receiving the “go-ahead” sign from the operator/driver of the stuck vehicle or the third party assisting in the tow the operator of the towing equipment will move forward slowly to remove the slack in the cable/sling
- Do not jerk the cable/sling and ensure the cable/sling remains taut throughout towing process. If the cable/sling develops slack, stop the tow, proceed slowly until the slack is removed, resume towing, tow the stuck vehicle until it can operate under its own power

Unhooking the vehicle
- Create slack in cable, while ensuring a safe distance is maintained between the vehicles
- Lower all attachments, set parking brake and signal to the operator/driver that it is safe to exit the vehicle
- Driver of the vehicle should unhook cable/sling and returning it to holders. Equipment operator should confirm that the cable/sling has been appropriately stored
- Equipment operator is responsible to ensure the driver returns to their vehicle prior to continuing normal operations