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Attention Businesses And Job Crews Who Use Truck-Mounted Mulch Or Bark Blower Systems

In line with a recent press release from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, truck-mounted systems used to blow mulch, bark, aggregate, and other landscaping materials have killed two workers and seriously injured a third in separate incidents. All incidents occurred shortly after workers climbed or fell into the truck hopper (cargo area) while the exposed mechanical equipment was running.

The truck hopper interior is typically classified as a [permit-required confined space](#).

To prevent these kinds of deadly incidents at your job sites:

- **Before work begins**, use the manufacturer's safety instructions and prohibitions in addition to applicable [safety rules](#) to develop work procedures for clearing jams and other potentially hazardous tasks.
- **Establish [lockout-tagout procedures](#)** for opening the rear hatch (tailgate) of the truck, to ensure hydraulic and other stored energy can't suddenly release, cause the hatch to fall, and hurt workers below.
- **Train crews** so they know the hopper interior is considered a permit-required confined space and that entry exposes them to hazards of moving belts, shafts, and augers that can trap and amputate body parts, crush, or kill. They'll also need additional required safety training including how to select, properly set-up, and use appropriate pushing tools, [safe ladders or scaffolds](#), PPE, and when applicable, [fall protection](#).
- **Should entry become necessary, use [permit-required confined space entry procedures](#)** that address lockout-tagout of mechanical and hydraulic stored energy, any possible engulfment hazards from material inside the hopper, and other safety precautions such as provision and use of fall protection, when applicable.
- **Ensure low-literacy and non-English speaking employees understand** all written safety procedures and verbal instructions to prevent [similar tragic incidents](#).

In addition to mechanical dangers of the work, employers need to [identify and address all site-specific hazards](#) as part of their [required Accident Prevention Program \(APP\)](#), [PPE assessment](#), and, when applicable, other [safety programs](#).

[Youth under age 18 are not permitted to operate this or other powered machinery or equipment.](#)

[Get 1-on-1 assistance from L&I](#) or visit L&I's [Safety & Health webpage](#) for training, videos, and other resources to help strengthen your safety program.

Questions on any of the topics addressed in this "WALP Watch"? Contact the WALP Office at info@walp.org or (425) 967-0729.