



# SAFETY ALERT

## Digger contractor rollover

### WHAT HAPPENED?

A contractor operating his digger on an East Coast farm was trapped inside his digger after it slid down a bank.

### WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

- A digger contractor was operating alone on farm on a weekend. As he moved along a track the bank gave way and the digger slid down a gully.
- The operator got out, alerted his company but then went back into the cab to fetch personal kit. The digger became unbalanced, slipped and tipped. The operator was trapped, broke a femur and cracked a vertebrae.
- Fire & Emergency were required to rescue the operator.

### HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

#### Contract Management:

- The contractor had been inducted on farm but the operator had not. Ensure all members of a contractor's crew know what the risks are on farm, where to go/not to go and what to do in an emergency.
- Check in/out. The operator had been working on the Friday but farm staff were unaware he was back on site on the Saturday. Ensure all contractors check in and out. Ensure you discuss when they expect to be on/off the property.

#### For Operators:

- Always carry your PLB on your body, not in the glovebox or seat next to you. Ensure you can reach it and use it at all times.
- The unstable vehicle wasn't safe to re-enter. When in doubt, don't mount or re-enter an unstable platform.

#### A note on diggers

**Traction:** The digger tracks were triple grouser design. While these types of tracks do not rip up the tracks surface they also have less grip. On this type of terrain a single grouser would be safer. It is unlikely a contractor is going to change their grouser plates for our application however they could buy bolt-on cleats for tracks which are a quick change and offer a massive leap in traction.

**Lesson:** Have a conversation with contractors about how they could improve traction on farm.

**Tractor size:** At 2.5 m wide this type of digger had very little margin for error.

**Lesson:** When discussing operations with operators, discuss where the narrow farm tracks are and whether the digger is suitable to operate in these areas.



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## CONVERSATIONS WORTH HAVING:



**What induction process do we have for contractors and their crew?**

**Do we have areas unsuitable for a digger on our farm?**



**How can we improve traction for diggers on our farm?**

**Are we checking in and out when we're working alone?**



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[farmwithoutoharm.org.nz/safety-alerts](https://farmwithoutoharm.org.nz/safety-alerts)