

Safety Note #131

GENERAL COTTON HARVEST SAFETY



Photographs Courtesy of West Side REC

Cotton harvesting involves the use of large cotton picking machinery along with towed cotton trailers and boll buggys for accumulation and removal of the cotton crop from the field. Care must be taken when these pieces of equipment are used together to prevent injuries to workers that are standing on the ground, moving into and outside of trailers, or taking cotton samples inside the trailers. California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 3203 (7) requires employees be trained about health and safety hazards in the workplace and CCR Title 8, Sections 3440 and 3441 describe regulations related to agricultural equipment.

General Cotton Harvest Safety Precautions

- Always wear appropriate personal protection equipment, including hearing and eye protection, shirt, long pants, closed toed shoes, and orange safety vest. Use of a long-sleeve shirt, hat, and dust mask are also recommended, but optional.
- Consume an adequate amount of water for the cotton harvesting weather conditions. Be aware of heat stress signs and preventative measures (see Safety Note #20 for more detailed information about heat stress).
- Be alert and aware of you surroundings and anticipate where machinery and equipment will be moving.
- Keep in the view of the cotton picker operator and lead ground person. Only stand on the trailer side of the cotton picker: never stand behind or cross in front of a cotton picker.
- The cotton picker operator is in charge of the harvesting operations followed by the lead ground person. Always follow their directions and signals.
- At the start of harvest, the cotton picker operator and lead ground person should establish a means of communication, whether by hand signals or other methods.
- When climbing into or out of a cotton trailer, use the ladder hand rails and steps. Do not jump from the top of the ladder into a cotton trailer.
- Personnel located inside a trailer to perform cotton sampling, must move to the furthest position from the cotton picker basket before it dumps into the trailer.
- The cotton picker operator is responsible for assuring personnel are clear from the trailer area where picked cotton will be dumped before raising the basket for dumping.
- If you smell smoke or hear belts squealing, immediately notify the lead ground person or cotton picker operator.
- If a fire occurs, back a safe distance from the equipment and allow the cotton picker operator or lead ground person to use the fire extinguisher to put the fire out.
- When using boll buggys (shown at right) never stand or walk along the wheel sides of the unit if it is being raised or lowered.

