



# **Worker fatally crushed under portable classroom**

October 9, 2020

---

## **The contents of this report**

This document reports the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) investigation of a fatal incident that occurred in October 2020. It begins with a short summary of what happened. The rest of the report covers this same information in greater detail.

## **Incident summary**

On October 9, 2020, at approximately 8:30 a.m., a work crew was in the process of moving a portable classroom, that was on a flatbed truck, into a permanent location at a local school. Two of the workers were instructed to go underneath the trailer to ensure the trailer and load were in line with steel pylons. During this process, a worker was crushed and fatally injured.

## **Background information**

### **Employer**

McCann's Building Movers Ltd. (McCann's) was a local Calgary company that had been in business since 1965. McCann's moved and transported buildings throughout Alberta. McCann's was hired by Rocky View School to transport, deliver and put into place two portable classrooms. McCann's had been hired by Rocky View School to perform this same work many times over the past years.

### **Prime contractor**

Rocky View School Division 41 (Rocky View) was the prime contractor for the work site. A prime contractor was required as the classrooms were being constructed together once they were put into place. Rocky View had three of their carpenters on the site that day to build the classrooms together.

### **Workers**

McCann's had seven workers on site on the day of the incident, five labourers, a truck driver and the site supervisor. Below are the worker descriptions of those who were directly involved.

#### **Worker 1**

The deceased worker (Worker 1) had been employed by McCann's as a general labourer for two previous summer months. Worker 1 had recently returned to work with McCann's three months prior to the incident. Worker 1 had done this same task previously and had experience moving similar loads.

#### **Worker 2**

Another McCann's labourer (Worker 2) was under the portable classroom and flatbed trailer at the time of the incident, assisting Worker 1 with the placement of the rig mats. Worker 2 had previous experience with moving similar loads.

#### **Truck driver**

The Truck Driver was in the truck cab at the time of the incident. They were not aware that there were workers still under the trailer when they were directed by the Site Supervisor to pull the truck forward. The Truck Driver was a McCann's employee who was an experienced truck driver.

## Site supervisor

The Site Supervisor was located at the front of the truck when they directed the Truck Driver to drive the truck and flatbed trailer forward. They had directed the workers to go under the load to set rig mats so the flatbed trailer would have a solid surface to back onto.

The Site Supervisor had been employed by McCann's for approximately 13 years.

## Work site, equipment, and materials

### Work site

The incident occurred at a Rocky View School in Airdrie, Alberta on the northwest side of the school. There were two rows of portable classrooms, and each row had three existing portable classrooms. The portable classroom (Figure 1 and 2) that was being moved into place at the time of the incident was being added to the west side of the first row of existing units.



*Figure 1. The truck and portable classroom that were being moved into place at the time of the incident.*

*A. Portable classroom being moved into place at the time of the incident*

### **Portable classroom on the flatbed trailer**

The portable classroom measured approximately 15.5 metres x 7 metres and weighed 2948 kilograms. The portable classroom was transported on a flatbed trailer. At location, the flatbed trailer was backed into spot in alignment with steel pylons that the portable classroom would eventually be placed on. Once in place, the portable classroom was to be constructed to the existing portable.



*Figure 2. Side view of the portable classroom that was being moved into place at the time of the incident.*

### **Sequence of events**

On October 9, 2020, McCann's workers were at the Rocky View School to deliver, and put into place, two portable classrooms. One of the portable classroom buildings had been placed in the yard, and the other was on a flatbed trailer.

The crew of seven workers, including Worker 1, proceeded with the task of backing the flatbed trailer and portable classroom into the spot where it would eventually be removed from the flatbed trailer. At least two of the workers, Worker 1 and Worker 2, were directed to go underneath the flatbed trailer and portable classroom to ensure the portable classroom was backing into alignment with the steel pylons.

As the flatbed trailer was being backed into place, the workers noticed that the flatbed trailer was starting to sink into the gravel on the right side.

The work was stopped at this point, and a decision was made to place rubber rig mats underneath the tires on the right side of the flatbed trailer to provide a more stable surface to be backed onto (Figure 3).





*Figure 3. View of the back end of the portable classroom. This location of the portable classroom is not in situ, as the flatbed trailer was moved to extricate Worker 1. At the time of the incident, the portable classroom would have been further back.*

*A. The steel pylon where Worker 1 was crushed*

*B. Rig mats that were placed for the flatbed trailer to back onto*

Workers 1 and 2, who were already underneath the flatbed trailer, were tasked with placing the rig mats behind each of the sets of tires. The mats would not fit directly underneath the tires, so the trailer needed to be moved forward.

The Site Supervisor yelled to the crew from the front of the truck that they were moving the truck. When the Truck Driver drove forward, Worker 1 was caught and crushed in between the cross beam on the underside of the flatbed trailer and a steel pylon sticking out of the ground. Workers heard a noise and looked under the trailer and saw Worker 1 was trapped. The flatbed trailer was moved so Worker 1 could be assisted.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) protocols were started by one of the Rocky View carpenters that was at the work site and continued until emergency medical services (EMS) arrived. EMS continued lifesaving efforts, but Worker 1 had suffered fatal injuries and was declared deceased on scene.

## **Completion**

A review for enforcement action was completed on March 31, 2021, and it was determined that the file would be referred to Alberta Justice for review. The entire file was sent to Alberta Justice on April 26, 2021. Charges were laid on May 4, 2022. McCann's Building Movers Ltd. pled guilty to contravention of Section 3(1)(a)(i) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, for failure to ensure the health and safety of Worker 1, a worker engaged in the work of this employer. At sentencing, on October 31, 2022, McCann's Building Movers Ltd. was fined \$320,000 inclusive of the 20 per cent victim fine surcharge.

This investigation was completed on March 31, 2023.

## Signatures

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

Lead Investigator

March 31, 2023

Date

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

Manager

March 31, 2023

Date