

STEERING WHEEL FAILURE

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DESCRIPTION:

A vacuum truck driver lost control of the vehicle when the steering wheel came off the steering column.

While descending a small hill, the steering wheel came off the column. The driver tossed it to the side, and attempted to use the steering column to control the unit while carefully applying the brakes. The vehicle went off the road, travelled through the ditch, and came to a stop in some small trees. The driver was uninjured and the empty vacuum unit stayed upright.



The damaged steering column

CAUSE OF INJURY OR LOSS:

Mechanical failure of the locking mechanism of the steering wheel.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

The steering wheel locking nuts were loose and came off completely when pressure was applied to the wheel. The locking mechanism failed due to the repeated use of the steering wheel as leverage to enter the cab and to adjust seat position.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS:

- Drivers should inspect all equipment before and after use
- Steering wheel locking nuts, tabs or pins should be inspected regularly, as per the manufacturer schedule
- Owner has added steering wheel securement to their maintenance inspections
- Owner has checked their entire fleet to ensure all steering wheel nuts are secure