

Apple Harvest Truck Driver Job Description

by A. DeMarree, CCE

1. Operate truck in a safe manner to minimize bruising of apples.
2. Pick up apples in orchard, assisting tractor driver loading the bins as necessary.
3. Complete paperwork for EVERY pick-up, regardless of where the fruit is going or being picked up (storage, orchard or loading area) – BEFORE leaving. Ask tractor driver for assistance if needed on variety, orchard number, etc. We want an audit trail of ALL fruit movement.
4. When delivering fruit to outside storage, processor or packinghouse:
 - Follow plant procedure
 - Place all paperwork in aluminum box to be turned in at days end
 - Note on your truck delivery sheet; weigh ticket numbers, inspection sheet numbers
 - **At processing plant:** examine inspection sheet – if bruising or rot is detected – ask for another inspection. If bruising or rot is detected in second inspection call the farm for instructions on what to do with the load of fruit – we may ask you to bring it back to the farm.
 - Also examine weigh ticket for load weight – if the load is less than 800 pounds per bin ask for confirmation of weight. October loads should be 820 – 860 pounds per bin. All problems should be reported to your supervisor ASAP.
 - Check for empty bins at plant after you are unloaded – bring empty bins back to farm, unless supervisor has instructed otherwise for that day. Check at beginning of day to get directions on where empty bins should be delivered (orchard number, farm yard or farm storage).
5. When returning to farm or orchard remove straps from load so load can be removed quickly. Also as the tractor driver is loading your truck begin placing and tightening straps as each set of bins is ready. Do not wait until the entire load is on the truck to begin placing straps, unless you are loading in a tight location where you need to be moving the truck to make loading possible.
6. Note any signs or notices to growers at the plant indicating new pricing schedules, variety harvest deadlines, requests for particular varieties or bin availability – report to supervisor ASAP.
7. Always operate in safe manner, following all laws and regulations. Any mechanical problems should be reported as soon as they are noticed to minimize repair bills and avoid anything that could contribute to an accident. Keep truck clean and maintain as needed. Complete all required DOT records.

Job Description for an Apple Picker

by A. DeMarree , C.C.E.

Must be physically fit, able to carry a full picking bag (40 – 45 lbs) down a 8 - 20 foot ladder between the tree and pallet box, repeatedly for 8 to 10 hours a day. Must be able to move and position a 20-foot ladder quickly.

Must be able to pick a minimum of 6 bins per day under good picking conditions without bruising the fruit. A good picker can pick between 8 – 12 bins per day consistently. A full bin of apples weighs between 800 – 875 pounds, depending on the variety and is generally 20 - 1 1/8 bushels

Must inspect and adjust picking equipment for proper fit and operation to avoid personal injury and promote efficiency. Must inspect ladders daily for cracks or weakness. Notify supervisor of equipment that needs replacement or refurbishing. Picking straps should be well padded and bag fastener should operate freely.

Must be safety conscious, watching for wood chuck holes and tractor movement while moving between the tree and apple bin. All safety hazards should be reported to the orchard supervisor immediately. Must wear safety eyewear to prevent eye damage from twigs.

Must be able to place a ladder securely in a tree to avoid damaged or weak branches that could cause slippage or breakage and a fall.

Must wash hands, using soap and water before and after using toilet facilities in the field. Must drink water continually during the day to stay hydrated and avoid bladder infections.

Must wear clothing and footwear appropriate to temperature and weather conditions. Clothing must be clean and free of rips, tears or dangling in a way that causes a safety hazard.

Must be able to understand and follow supervisor directions to promote cooperation among fellow workers when finishing an orchard (to avoid part boxes of fruit) and organization when moving into a new orchard.

Must be able to communicate problems and suggestions to the owner or orchard supervisor to promote a good work environment and increase cooperation between all harvest workers.

Must be able to see green and red and differentiate between green, cream and yellow background color on apples and peaches to determine maturity level and percent of red color for market requirements.

Must be able to tell the difference between apple varieties so as not to mix apple varieties in the same bin or pick a variety that is not yet mature. Many orchards have more than one variety for pollenization.

Must be able to pick fruit without bruising it with fingers during picking and placing the fruit in the bag in a manner that the fruit does not hit other fruit, causing bruising. Must be able to unload the picking bag into the bin without causing bruising (slowly with a flowing motion, without leaning the bag against the side of the bin). Must be able to hold the picking bag so as not to cause bruising when climbing down a ladder.

Must be able to judge fruit size quickly to avoid picking fruit under 2 3/8 – 2 1/2 inches (depending on the market) and over 3 3/4 inches for the fresh fruit markets. Must be able to avoid picking fruit under 2 1/2 inches in diameter for the peeler apple market.

Must be able to avoid picking fruit with physical defects (sunburn, insect damage, disease damage, cracked or bird-pecked) and under-colored fruit.

Must be able to avoid rotten apples if picking up “drop” apples for the juice market.

Job Description: Quality Control Position

A. DeMarree, C.C.E.

(We recommend 1 QC person per 10-15 workers or per 20 workers using bin trailers)

1. Check each picker's bin at least every 75 minutes for bruising and picking to the standards for the particular orchard (size, color, avoidance of damaged fruit) and bin (fresh versus process). Check problem pickers more frequently. Minimize conversations with pickers.

This involves looking at 20 apples each time you inspect a bin and noting irregularities. Bruising needs to be reported immediately to the orchard supervisor (usually _____). All problems will be handled by orchard supervisor – the quality control person is **not** responsible for notifying pickers of problems.

2. Tag each bin, completing picker number, variety, block number and date picked as the picker is picking the bin. Use magic marker to mark bin ticket with large “J” to assist tractor and truck drivers in stacking bins. Detach upper part of ticket and turn in at day end with summary of that days harvest by picker on Q.C. daily report.
3. Note picker needs (picker needs ladder, bin needs to be moved closer to tree being picked, empty bin needed to be placed ahead of picker, picker is finishing row) and report or remind tractor driver of the need.
4. Be aware of general conditions in the orchard;
 - Listen for “sound of apple bruising”: apples being dropped in bag, apples being “dumped” in bin.
 - Note location of tractor drivers and move safely between pickers to avoid stepping in front of tractors loaded with bin.
 - Have general idea of each pickers location so that individual pickers can be located quickly.
5. Picker safety and comfort:
 - Make sure that fresh 5-gallon water jugs with paper cups are in the orchard at start of day and at noon.
 - Remind tractor drivers to move portable toilets, if necessary as the crew moves between orchards.
 - Report any unsafe or uncomfortable conditions to supervisor.
6. Assist with movement between orchards when requested (moving ladders, water or people as one block is completed and harvest of another orchard is beginning).
7. Assist with other farm jobs associated with harvest when requested by supervisor.

Job Description

1. Check with supervisor and plan ahead for the next day or next several days;
 - Discuss blocks of apples to be harvested that week and intended market for each block
 - i. how many pickers you will be servicing in a particular block
 - ii. are there special requirements for the buyer (type of bin to be used)
 - iii. will drops be picked up, or will the pickers be picking into two bins (fresh & process or fresh & juice or peelers & juice)
 - iv. how will pickers be placed in a particular orchard, one picker every 2 or 3 rows? – and how will bins be placed? - fresh bins in one row, process bins in another?
 - Box out each orchard at least the day before it is to be harvested or be sure that there is an adequate supply of bins at staging area when bin trailers are used
 - Be sure there are additional bins nearby in case enough bins were not place in each row
2. Support harvest by servicing pickers in the following ways;
 - Keep bins (that pickers are picking into) close to trees they are currently picking to avoid extra walking and carrying heavy picking sacks.
 - Be sure that an empty bin is in front of picker to avoid down time of picker waiting for bin.
 - Monitor where each picker is and plan ahead as to where you will move that picker as his or her row is being completed to minimize part bins of apples
 - Pick up picker ticket when removing bin from row. All picker tickets need to be turned in at day's end for daily records.
 - Check picking bags and assist picker is adjusting bags or replacing parts as needed (straps, bag liners, etc.)
3. Minimize and avoid problems by;
 - Keep track of picker and quality control person location, operate in safe manner to avoid accidents with pedestrians in orchard, pickers on ladders and or damaging bins or ladders.
 - Remove bins from orchard as they are filled, unless the quality control person indicates there is a problem with bruising. Any problem bins should be left in row for supervisor inspection.
 - Move full bins carefully, avoid jarring which causes bruising.
 - When drops are to be picked up, monitor the rows being picked. A picker should clean up drops every 6-8 trees or 10 – 12 trees (depending on tree density) rather than picking the row and going back for drops when the row is done. This avoids problem of driving over apples to remove bins and picker arguments over who needs to pick up which row or which trees, when the orchard is nearing completion.

- Do not allow pickers to “ground pick” several trees, leaving fruit in the top of the tree for someone else to pick.
- If a picker decides to quit picking early, without finishing his or her rows when an orchard is being finished, report to supervisor ASAP – do not ask other pickers to finish the row of absent picker unless otherwise instructed.
- Keep moving fruit out of orchard as it is being picked and time allows – do not wait until the end of the day to clear-out the orchard and stack full bins. Fruit quality declines as fruit sits in the orchard.
- When drops are being picked up – monitor for leaves in bin – report pickers to supervisor when picker continues to have unnecessary leaves in bin.
- Assist quality control person by notifying him or her of suspected bruising or when you suspect pickers are not picking to standards. Leave suspect bins in orchard for supervisor to inspect with picker ticket in bin.

4. Moving full bins out of orchard, daily clean-up;

- Stack bins in separate piles (fresh, peelers or juice) at the loading area, as they are removed from each pickers row in a way that will facilitate loading them on a truck.
- Use a magic marker to write a code on bin tickets to assist truck driver. Example: a giant J written over the entire bin ticket indicates juice, an E might indicate Empire, a P might indicate peeler and F may indicate fresh. Be ready to supply truck driver with information as to orchard number or name and variety for his or her paperwork.

5. When completing one orchard and beginning another;

- Minimize part bins of apples by carefully moving pickers to clean-up rows or preventing a picker from starting a bin he or she will not be able to complete by moving them to the next orchard.
- Notify quality control person and supervisor for assistance moving people, ladders and water as an orchard is being finished.
- Run final inspection of each row and row end to be sure that full bins are not left in the orchard. Also stack empty bins in designated area so that they may be moved to the next orchard.
- Move port-a-potty to the next orchard.
- Make sure that all partially filled bins are identified with a completed bin ticket so that the bin can move with the picker to the next orchard.
- Make arrangements to move partial bins to the appropriate location.

6. Check with supervisor at days end;

- Report any problems, turn in daily picker tickets and discuss progress of harvest
- Check for any changes of plan for the coming day