

## Forklift takes a trip

Written by By: Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 16 April 2021 03:59

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People at the Navajo Law Center were left wondering ‘where did this tractor come from?’ when a blue tractor appeared outside the business one morning.

Linda Roanhorse saw the tractor when she arrived at work March 26. She did not know where it had come from or who it belonged to.

McKinley County Sheriff’s Office Sgt. Tammy Houghtaling arrived at the Navajo Law Center in Yah-Ta-Hey around 10 am. She met Roanhorse when she got there.

The tractor was a hay squeeze forklift with California tags. When Houghtaling ran the plates, she found the tractor belonged to Richard Martinez, of Lemoore, Calif., but that it had recently been sold to Esquivel Gavino of Buckeye, Ariz., in August.

Dispatch was able to find a phone number for Gavino’s company Esquivel Chicano Trucking. Houghtaling called Gavino and he claimed the tractor. He said he wasn’t in town, but that he would have someone pick it up.

Houghtaling told Gavino that a tow truck was already on its way.

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Delores Ruiz arrived and took the tractor. After looking it over he said the ignition was damaged, but that the keys were under the seat. He drove it back to the flea market area on New Mexico Highway 608 and told Gavino he would keep it there until he got back into town.

Gavino stated that Speedway Power Motor Sports had been renting the forklift from him. He asked Houghtaling to go to the business and check their surveillance cameras.

Houghtaling met with business owner Chris Hill. He let Houghtaling look at the videos. One of them showed two men coming out of the ditch area between Speedway Power Motor Sports and Safeway. The men tried to get into the forklift, but they had a little trouble.

One of the men was able to get into the hay squeeze forklift eventually. He got the machine started and left the business going north on Highway 608.

Hill said he would give Houghtaling a copy of the video. She tried to call Gavino several times to get his information, but he did not respond after his hay squeeze forklift was returned. Why the forklift was abandoned at the Navajo Law Center is still a mystery.

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