

PREVENTING FORKLIFT ACCIDENTS

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

Studies show that many forklift accidents could have been prevented by better training. No one starts out with the innate knowledge, skills, and abilities to safely operate a forklift. As OSHA requires, drivers must be properly trained to do so. The lesson to be learned is, operating a forklift without training is dangerous and can even be fatal to you or other employees working in the area.

Training can also prevent or reduce the severity of an accident related to the stability of a lift truck traveling with an elevated load. Keep the load as low as possible to increase vehicle stability and to help prevent tip-over accidents. Even if drivers ignore this rule, and the vehicle tips over, injuries are usually minor if they stay with the vehicle instead of jumping off.

The normal tendency is for a person to jump downward, so the driver lands on the floor or ground--usually directly into the path of the overhead guard. The most common result is a crushing injury to the head, neck, or back where the overhead guard strikes the employee. Forty-two percent of forklift fatalities are caused by the operator trying to jump from a tipping vehicle. To keep this from happening to you, always remember to keep the load as low as possible and stay with the vehicle if it tips over.

Wearing your seat belt is the best safety measure!

FORKLIFT SAFETY

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

Forklifts assist us with various tasks around a construction site. Most of us take them for granted without giving a great deal of thought to safety, whether we're operating them or working near them.

A forklift is designed to pick up heavy objects and move them from one place to another, or raise heavy or bulky loads to high levels. Lumber, brick, block, shingles, bags of concrete and tubs of mortar are just a few examples of material that can be moved by forklift on a construction site. Various other types of business use them to perform innumerable lifting tasks. A forklift should only be operated by a trained, competent person. Never let someone operate a forklift who is not qualified to drive.

Inspect your forklift prior to use. Check the mast for any broken or cracked weld-points. Be sure the forks are spaced apart equally and free from cracks. Check the tires for proper inflation and the fuel and hydraulic fluid levels.

Some forklifts are battery powered; others use gasoline or diesel, and some use propane. If your forklift is battery powered be sure you **do not smoke** in the charging area. If the lift is propane powered be sure you change the fuel cylinder outside, away from any buildings, and remember **no smoking** is the rule. As always, **no smoking** when refueling with gasoline or diesel.

After completing your inspection get in the cab and buckle up the seat belt. With your foot on the brake, put the gear shift lever in the neutral position and turn the key. Be sure to check all gauges, controls and brakes before moving, and then watch out for all workers in your area of operation. Prior to making any lift be sure you know the capacity of the forklift. This information is located on the manufacturer's ID plate. You must also know the weight of what you are going to lift. If in doubt, or if you have any questions, check with your supervisor.

If the load blocks your vision in the front, drive in reverse or use a signal person. Don't take chances!

FORKLIFT SAFETY BASICS

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Forklifts save time and reduce the likelihood of injury associated with manual material handling activities. However, forklifts can become very dangerous if operated by a reckless or untrained operator. Forklift accidents tend to be very serious. Here are a few common safety rules to follow during forklift operation:

1. No one may operate a forklift unless trained and authorized to do so.
2. An evaluation of each operator's performance shall be conducted at least once every three years.
3. Use the seat belt. It will keep you secured in the seat in the unplanned event of a tip over.
4. A parked forklift should have the forks flat on the floor with the controls set to neutral and with the parking brake set.
5. A forklift is considered to be "unattended" if the operator is more than 25 feet away or if the forklift is out of the direct vision of the operator. Unattended forklifts should be parked with the power turned off.
6. When operating the forklift on inclines, the load should always be on the uphill side of the incline. Drive forward going up the incline. Drive backward going down the incline.
7. When traveling without a load on the forks, keep the forks approximately four to six inches off the floor.
8. Never allow anyone to walk underneath a raised load.
9. Stop at all blind corners to check for other traffic in the area. This includes other forklifts and pedestrians. Honk your horn and look before you proceed.
10. If carrying a tall load that blocks your forward vision, drive in reverse.

Forklift safety is for everyone's benefit.

FORKLIFT OPERATOR RETRAINING

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

Refresher training and evaluation: [29 CFR 1910.178(l)(4)]

Refresher training, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of that training, shall be conducted to ensure that the operator has the knowledge and skills needed to operate the powered industrial truck safely. Refresher training in relevant topics shall be provided to the operator when:

- The operator has been observed to operate the vehicle in an unsafe manner.
- The operator has been involved in an accident or near-miss incident.
- The operator has received an evaluation that reveals that the operator is not operating the truck safely.
- The operator is assigned to drive a different type of truck.
- A condition in the workplace changes in a manner that could affect safe operation of the truck.

FORKLIFT OPERATOR RESPONSIBILITY

SAFETY TOOL BOX TALK

Hamilton County Municipal Judge Russell Mock found a Pepsi America employee guilty Tuesday in the December 4, 2006 industrial-accident death of co-worker Michael Martin.

Mock found John Burton, 50, of East Price Hill, guilty of vehicular homicide and faces up to six months in jail.

Prosecutors have said Burton was driving in reverse down a ramp when he crushed Martin who was standing next to his forklift trying to change the propane tank used to fuel it. Mock said Burton testified he "saw something" out of the corner of his eye, but did not stop. "When you're driving a motor vehicle made of steel that's extremely heavy, you have a duty to stop," Mock said.

When you're out driving your forklift today, think about this article. Ensure you are aware of your surroundings, blowing your horn and doing the things needed to ensure your coworkers go home safe.

This does not relieve employees working around a forklift all responsibility. Stay out of the way. Make sure you have not put yourself into a area that has the potential of being hit or crushed by the machine.

FORKLIFT FATALITIES

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OSHA estimates forklifts cause about 85 *fatal* accidents per year; 34,900 accidents result in serious injury; and 61,800 are classified as non-serious.

According to the Industrial Truck Association, there are about 855,900 forklifts in the U.S. Therefore, over 11% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident each year (assuming only one accident per forklift). The ITA also reports that the useful life of a lift truck is about 8 years. This means that about 90% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident during their useful life--again assuming only one accident per forklift. If you operate this equipment, there is a possibility that you may have an accident at some point during your career.

To help reduce the possibility of being injured, it's important to understand where and how these accidents occur. Fatal forklift accident causes and where they occur:

FATAL ACCIDENT TYPE

- 42% - Crushed by vehicle tipping over
- 25% - Crushed between vehicle and a surface
- 11% - Crushed between two vehicles
- 10% - Struck or run over by a forklift
- 8% - Struck by falling material
- 4% - Fall from platform on the forks

WHERE FATALITIES OCCUR

- 42.5% - Manufacturing
- 23.8% - Construction
- 12.5% - Wholesale trades
- 11.0% - Transportation
- 9.0% - Retail trade
- 1.2% - Mining

CRUSHED BETWEEN TWO FORKLIFTS

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The International Paper manufacturing plant in Lynchburg was temporarily closed Friday after the death of a third-shift worker shortly after midnight. Jerry Wayne Evans, 39, of Forest, died at Lynchburg General Hospital from injuries he received in an accident at the plant. Lynchburg Fire Battalion Chief Greg Wormser said an industrial accident was reported at 12:15 a.m. Friday. Rescue workers arrived at the 3401 Mayflower Drive plant within a few minutes, he said.

"From what I understand, somebody was trapped between two forklifts (and) had to be extricated," said Wormser, reading a medical report on the incident. He said the report did not indicate how Evans became trapped. IP spokeswoman Amy Sawyer said that the company still is investigating the accident's cause. Evans was taken to Lynchburg General Hospital, where he later died from his injuries.

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Forklift deaths occur weekly throughout the United States. This facility produces corrugated containers with approximately 150 employees and utilizes several types of powered industrial trucks. Although the official cause of the events has not been released, the following was relayed from a coworker and friend who was reportedly there: The forklift Jerry was driving got wedged between two enormous rolls of paper. They hooked a chain to his and one other to tow his out. Upon getting his out he put his parking brake on and went to unhook the chain. The parking brake apparently failed and his forklift rolled back and crushed him between the two.

Based on this we have to assume the parking brake was set. However, this tragic death highlights the importance of doing daily before-use safety inspections of the forklift prior to operating it; including the parking brake.

Deaths and injuries are always a surprise. We are shocked that they happen, but they do. We must plan ahead to avoid hazard, thereby avoiding the injuries and deaths. One major tool in this is a JSA. Do them each morning and do them correctly.

