

# Forklift Fatalities and Injuries Meeting Kit



## INTRODUCTION

The forklift is a commonly used tool that helps people lift and move heavy loads with very little physical effort and excellent precision. Using a forklift lessens the risk of injuries caused by lifting or carrying heavy items. For this reason, many companies employ forklifts and forklift operators to do this kind of labor. These machines are powerful, though, and there is always risk involved when they are used by people who have not been trained on operating them safely.

## HOW DO FORKLIFT ACCIDENTS OCCUR

Here are several scenarios.

- A worker is helping to guide a forklift load into place. He is crushed between the load and a stack of crates.
- Your coworker is operating a forklift near the edge of a loading dock. The wheels roll too close the edge, and the truck falls to the level below. The driver receives disabling injuries.
- A forklift operator reaches through the uprights to the load in front of him. His arm is crushed by the descending lift mechanism.

## THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF FORKLIFT SAFE WORK PRACTICES

### DO's

- Perform a visual and operational check of the forklift at the start of the shift.
- Buckle up as soon as you get on the forklift.
- Place forks as far under the load as possible. Drive with load against heel of rack with mast tilted back. Be sure forks are spaced correctly to support load.
- Operate a forklift smoothly when stopping, starting, lifting and tilting.
- Carry load as low as possible.
- Sound horn before moving forklift when other vehicles or worker may not be able to see forklift movement.

- Match speed to driving surfaces, load and workplace conditions.
- Know that overloading the forklift can cause loss of steering.
- Check for adequate overhead clearance before raising the load.
- Keep forks pointed uphill when traveling with a load on an incline.
- Keep forks pointed downhill when traveling without a load on an incline.
- Travel in reverse when load is blocking frontal vision.
- Sound horn and slow down when approaching pedestrians, doorways, rows aisles, ramps and other forklifts.
- Keep pedestrians away and raise and lower the load smoothly. Any elevated load is hazardous.
- Stop when a group of people are waking across the route being traveled: lower the load to the floor, and wait until the people get by before proceeding.
- Watch out for pedestrians, avoid driving a forklift up to anyone who is standing in front of a bench or other fixed object.
- Stay constantly alert to changing or unusual conditions.
- Always be prepared to stop.
- Whenever anything develops that affects the normal operation of the forklift, tell the supervisor immediately.
- Report any accidents promptly to supervisor, immediately.
- Use only approved personnel platforms, securely fastened to the forks to elevate anyone. Reduce speed when doors, corners and elevations restrict vision. Keep to right unless plant conditions or layout dictate otherwise.
- Park forklift with controls in neutral, brakes applied and forks in a down position with the motor switched off.
- Keep hands, arms, head and feet and legs inside the confines of a moving forklift.
- Observe and obey the load capacity of the forklift.

## **DON'T**

- Do not leave forklifts running inside for long periods of time without ventilation.
- Do not handle steering wheel if your hands or gloves are greasy or slippery.
- Do not try to move or adjust any part of the load, the forklift or the surroundings when on the forklift.
- Do not move loads that are piled or stacked poorly.
- Do not lift a load that extends above the load backrest unless no part of the load can possibly slide back toward the operator.
- Do not allow anyone but the operator to ride on the forklift.
- Do not use pallets elevated by forklifts as an improvised working platform.
- Do not permit anyone to stand or walk under the elevated part of any forklift, whether loaded or unloaded.
- Do not allow anyone to stand, walk or work under elevated forks.

## **FINAL WORD**

The list of possible forklift hazards can be a long one depending on the work environment and the specific work tasks being performed. Quickly one of the most useful tools on the job can turn into the cause of a fatality for you or a coworker. Treat forklifts with respect and never become complacent to the very real hazards their operation presents.