Worker’s Head Crushed By Forklift



A worker was hired to clean up and crush cars in an automobile junkyard. He was new on the job and received no safety training from his employer.

On the day of the incident, the victim was throwing scrap metal into junk cars before they were carried over to the crusher. There were two vehicles operating in the area, a loader that was operating slightly downhill from the scene, and a forklift that was operating in close proximity to the victim and the crusher.

At some point the victim was found lying face down with his head crushed. The forklift operator, who ran over the victim, was an experienced operator of 10 years.

The rearward visibility of the forklift was severely limited by the engine compartment and a vertical air intake. The forklift was equipped with a functional backup bell. It was noted the victim had previously suffered some loss of hearing in one ear.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Investigators pointed to several factors that contributed to this fatality.

First, the victim was new on the job, and had not received any safety training about hazards, particularly regarding the limited visibility of forklifts.

Second, the forklift had limited visibility for its operator while reversing. Third, the victim may not have heard the backup bell because of his hearing impairment. Fourth, the victim may have been standing with his back to the forklift, and may have been lighting a cigarette when he was run over. Finally, the experienced operator did not look adequately to see what was in his path before he reversed.

This accident might have been prevented if the victim had been instructed by his employer about the hazards of working around forklifts. Also, the operator of the forklift should have been trained to turn completely around and look to both sides before reversing.