

Safety and health alert

12/01 Unsafe use of tractors modified for use as forklifts

Incident

A labourer working in a market garden had one of the vertebrae in his back crushed when he was run over by a tractor while retrieving equipment that was in the tractor's path. The operator of the tractor, which had been modified for use as a forklift by fitting front and rear forklift attachments, was unable to see the labourer because his field of view was obstructed by crates stacked on the forklift attachment.

Factors

1. The operator's field of view was obstructed by the load being carried on the front and rear forklift attachments (see photo above).
2. Rather than requiring that the tractor be loaded in such a way that the operator's view was not obstructed, the system of work in place at the workplace required employees to stay out of the fields while the tractor was in use.
3. The tractor, which had been modified by fitting front and rear forklift attachments, was not being operated in accordance with *AS 2359.2-1985 Industrial trucks - Operation* as required by regulation 4.55 of the .

Recommendations

1. Tractors fitted with forklift attachments must be operated in accordance with AS 2359.2-1985 Industrial trucks - Operation, and persons operating such tractors should be trained to the competencies specified in the *National Guidelines for Occupational Health and Safety Competency Standards for the Operation of Loadshifting Equipment and Other Types of Specified Equipment [NOHSC: 7019 (1992)]*
2. Forklift operators should always:
 - i. ensure that the load does not obstruct their field of view;
 - ii. drive in a safe manner consistent with the operating surface, physical layout of the operating area, and any potential hazards; and
 - iii. ensure that the load is as low as is practical.
3. Where a tractor has been modified by the fitting of one or more forklift attachments, a load chart indicating the maximum safe working load for each such attachment must be fitted and clearly visible.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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