

Forklifts

'read out'

Here is an example of an incident in WA.

During the construction of a shopping centre, a fitter was installing the fire protection system on site. He was carrying a large piece of plasterboard when he was reversed over by a forklift truck in the mall area.

The forklift truck driver stopped, thinking he had reversed on to a piece of fallen plasterboard which was obstructing his path. The driver dismounted in order to investigate, only to find the fitter underneath the plasterboard. The fitter, was taken to hospital, underwent surgery and suffered a broken tibia and fibia in his left leg, wounds in his left foot, a broken left ankle and a dislocated bone in his right leg. It is almost two years since the incident, and he has still not returned to work.

'ask'

Q *What factors contributed to the incident?*

Possible answers: *Forklifts v pedestrian lack of awareness – training for all staff is a common issue; no forklift drivers licence; lack of signage eg. don't walk behind forklifts; mobile plant - don't carry uneven loads.*

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Incidents like this one cause 830 reported lost time injuries and at least one death a year in WA, which is really just a small proportion of the injuries that occur but are not reported. More than a third of these cases are a result of muscular stress while handling loads. Other common injuries include getting caught in moving parts, falls from height, workers/pedestrians being trapped or caught between a moving forklift/moving parts of a forklift and stationary object; collisions between forklifts and other vehicles or stationary objects; and forklift operators and others being hit by falling objects.

Workplace safety and health is everyone's responsibility

Our employer has a duty of care to provide a safe workplace and systems of work, information, instruction, training, supervision and an opportunity for workers to consult about occupational safety and health.

In relation to forklifts this would include:

- Identifying hazards associated with our environment at work, like ensuring that there is minimal interaction between pedestrians and forklifts, that visibility is clear for those working around forklifts, looking at the sort of work we do then assessing the risks associated with the identified hazards. For example, if workers are working long shifts, they may be more likely to have an incident. Identify what tasks are expected to be completed at what stage in the shift.
- Developing safe work procedures for forklifts taking into account identified issues and particular hazards in the workplace. Prepare safe procedures or job instructions for particular tasks, distribute and explain safe procedures to all relevant workers and review and audit safe procedures regularly to ensure they are achieving safe and healthy outcomes.
- Providing instruction and training based on the procedures developed to people who operate, inspect, maintain, store or transport forklifts, or who work in the vicinity of forklifts. For example, occupational safety and health regulations say that an employer must ensure that the operator of the forklift uses the seat belt. If a worker was injured because he/she was not wearing the seat belt, then the company could be prosecuted. You must be trained in all attachments used on forklifts and make sure they are only used as specified in the manufacturer's specifications. Examples of attachments are fork extensions, jibs and drum lifters.

As individuals, we have a responsibility to take care to protect our own safety and health and that of others affected by our work, to follow instructions, and only use forklift trucks for the purpose for which they are designed. We should all be provided with appropriate information and training to allow us to fulfil that obligation. For example, forklifts must travel up ramps forwards, therefore the load must face uphill. When travelling the load and forks arms should be at approximately axle height. People should never be lifted or transported on bare fork arms or a load. If the forklift is going to be used to lift people it must be fitted with a secured safety cage.

Important changes have occurred to the requirements to operate forklifts in Western Australia.

The National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work requires operators of forklifts to hold a national licence, issued by WorkSafe. You must be 18 years or over to have a licence.

Operators of the following types of forklifts must hold a licence:

Forklift truck - covers the operation of a powered industrial truck equipped with a mast and an elevating load carriage to which is attached a pair of fork arms or other attachment. This type of forklift is generally referred to as a counter-balance forklift.

Order picking forklift truck - covers the operation of a powered industrial truck of a type where the operator's control arrangement is incorporated with the load carriage/lifting media, and elevates with it.

Provision has been made by WorkSafe for people currently operating forklifts in accordance with the previous requirements to continue to work. A timetable has been developed that identifies the dates when forklift operators are required to have converted their existing certificates or approved qualifications to a national licence, subject to meeting application and assessment requirements.

However, all people operating forklifts for the first time will need to obtain a licence before being permitted to operate a forklift.

'ask'

Q. Before I finish, is there anything that you can identify that we could be doing better in this workplace in relation to the use of forklifts?

Take notes about any suggestions...don't panic if there aren't any takers.

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OK, unless anyone has any questions, thanks for listening to me.

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