

Safety and health alert

29/95 Driver dies in forklift rollover

Incident

A driver was fatally injured when his 2.5 tonne capacity fork-lift rolled over on a public road next to a construction site in Kalgoorlie in August 1995.

The fork-lift had been unloading bricks and was returning to the trailer used to transport it between sites. The driver made a sharp turn approaching the trailer ramp, and the fork-lift rolled over. The driver attempted to jump clear but was crushed beneath the fork-lift.

The fork arms were raised 2.4 metres and were not carrying a load.

Factors

- The fork-lift was turning sharply.
- The driver attempted to jump clear during roll over.
- The driver was not adequately supervised or trained for fork-lift operation.
- **No seat belt or seat side restraints were fitted.**
- The fork-lift was moving with the fork arms raised.

The accident has similar features to numerous fork-lift fatalities investigated by WorkSafe Western Australia:

- *fork-lifts turning sharply, which can be dangerous even at low speeds*
- *operators jumping or being thrown from an overturning fork-lift*
- *unladen fork-lifts, frequently less stable than laden fork-lifts*

Recommendations

1. Fork-lift operators should be trained equivalent to Australian Standard AS2359.2 - 1985 and Worksafe Australia's National Guidelines for Occupational Health and Safety Competency Standards for the Operation of Loadshifting Equipment and Other Types of Specified Equipment[NOHSC: 7019 (1993)].
2. Agreed safe systems of work must be used to ensure employees are not exposed to workplace hazards. Training operators to a high skill level will not result in safe fork-lift operation if unsafe systems of work are allowed in the workplace.
3. Fork-lifts must be driven slowly and carefully when making sharp turns, particularly when unladen. Fork-lifts have a very tight turning circle. They will roll over -- even at low speeds (below 7 km/hr) -- if turned too sharply.
4. A seat belt and seat side restraints that support the top half of the body and waist are required to contain the operator within the fork-lift so that they cannot jump or be thrown from an overturning fork-lift.
5. During a fork-lift roll over, operators should not attempt to jump clear -- they should brace themselves and stay in the fork-lift.



6. An operator's manual must be available with every fork-lift, including hire fork-lifts, clearly indicating all operational restrictions such as operating speed (including cornering) for all configurations.
7. Fork-lifts should unload vehicles on public roads only from the kerb side, unless traffic control measures are used to keep traffic out of fork-lift operating areas.

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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