

Safety and health alert

19/96 Falls from forklifts

Incident

1. Two workers received serious injuries when a work platform fell 5 metres off the raised fork arms of a forklift, in a Bayswater warehouse in August 1995.

The work platform, which was supplied by a hire company, was not secured to the forklift. The workers used the work platform on a forklift for stocktaking for two hours before it fell off the fork-lift arms when one worker shifted his weight to the front of the platform.

One worker broke a collar bone, fractured two ribs and dislocated a shoulder, and the second worker fractured his pelvis and hip.

2. A similar incident occurred in December 1995 when an electrician was injured after a forklift cage overturned, causing him to fall several metres to a concrete floor.
3. A truck driver died in 1992 when he fell less than 3 metres from a pallet which was used as a raised work platform on the fork arms of a forklift.

Factors

The Bayswater company did not use their own work platforms because they had been identified as unsafe. It was assumed the hire company's work platforms would be safe so they were not checked before use.

In the first two accidents, chains for securing the work platforms to the forklift were not used because shackle pins were not supplied. The base of the work platforms had no lower struts or fork arm tunnels to prevent lifting off the fork arms if the load became unbalanced.

The hire companies involved in the Bayswater accident appear not to have checked their work platforms before delivery, and are now the subject of prosecution action under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1996*.

The company which hired the work platforms appears not to have checked their safety, and did not ensure safety instructions posted in the work platforms were followed. They have been fined \$1000 for a breach of section 19(1)(a) of the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*.

Recommendations

1. Work platforms on forklifts should be used for working at heights only when other means, such as purpose built stockpickers, elevating work platforms or scaffolding are not practical.
2. Hire company work platforms must be checked for safety before delivery to the client, and must be supplied with correct safety equipment and instructions.
3. Work platforms on forklifts must:
 - o be used by trained operators



- have safety instructions attached
 - be secured to both the fork arms and the mast of the forklift
 - have a purpose-designed harness attachment
 - have safety checking procedures
 - conform to Australian Standard 2359.2-1985, clause 3.8 and Australian Standard 2359.1-1995, section 12.
4. Forklift operators should:
- have training in using work platforms
 - raise and lower the empty work platform before workers enter it, to ensure that it clears all possible obstructions. Take particular care when there are electrical wires nearby
 - use only the raise and lower controls while workers are in the work platform. The controls must be clearly marked to ensure that the platform is not raised by accident when it was meant to be lowered.
 - remain at the controls with the forklift engine running at all times when workers are raised in a work platform.
5. Persons using work platforms on forklifts must ensure an adequate system of work is maintained at all times.

The WorkSafe Western Australia Library has several excellent forklift training videos which are available for loan. For more information telephone (08) 9327 8760.

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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