

# Working Near Forklifts Doesn't Have to Mean Injuries

**Forklift accidents involving pedestrians are not always the forklift driver's fault. Here are some tips for training employees who work near forklifts.**

Put a big, heavy, dangerous moving machine like a forklift up against an employee, and the employee doesn't stand much of a chance. The forklift will roll right over the worker, and the worker will be lucky to survive. Since you can't completely segregate workers from forklifts in most situations, your only choice is to train forklift drivers and pedestrians to recognize hazards and take proper precautions to prevent accidents and injuries. In this safety tip we'll focus on what to tell pedestrians.

**Make sure pedestrians understand the hazards.** Hazards associated with working around forklifts include:

- Being struck by a forklift
- Being crushed between a forklift and a structure
- Being struck by falling objects (materials carried by the forklift)
- Having feet run over by forklift wheels
- Falling from a forklift (if hitching an unauthorized ride or being lifted by forks in violation of safety rules)
- Fires in refueling and recharging areas (often connected with violations of smoking rules)

**Emphasize risk factors.** Factors that contribute to forklift/pedestrian accidents include:

- Visibility problems for forklift operators
- Workers coming too close to forklifts
- Risk-taking by pedestrians
- Operators failing to follow traffic rules
- Pedestrians not paying attention to forklift activities in the work area
- Lack of cooperation between operators and pedestrians

**Teach workers how to prevent forklift/pedestrian accidents.** By following these rules employees who work near forklifts can keep safe:

- Always be alert for forklift activity in your work area, and keep track of where forklifts are and what they are doing at all times.
- Avoid getting too close to forklifts while you work.
- Listen for horns, backup alarms, and other warnings.
- Look both ways before crossing aisles.
- Obey traffic signs.
- Use pedestrian walkways, and remain behind barriers when available.
- Realize that it is dangerous to assume that forklift operators will always see you.
- Wear high-visibility clothing when working around forklifts.
- Take extra care in noisy work areas where you might not hear forklift horns, backup alarms, and other warnings.

- Understand that you should never try to "beat" a forklift or try to slip by a moving forklift.
- Obey safety rules, and never hitch a ride on a forklift or ride on the forks.
- Avoid walking or standing under raised forks even if they're empty.
- Avoid standing where you could be crushed between a forklift and a structure like a wall, column, storage rack, or piece of equipment.
- Refrain from engaging in horseplay when working around forklifts (or anywhere else).
- Avoid distracting forklift operators.
- Obey no-smoking rules in forklift refueling or recharging areas (and anywhere else).
- Understand that you should never operate a forklift unless you are both trained and authorized.

### **Why It Matters...**

- Every year thousands of workers are injured in forklift accidents.
- Injuries are often serious—workers may be disabled or killed.
- A large percentage of those injured are pedestrians—employees working or walking in areas where forklifts operate.
- Training forklift operators to drive safely and obey traffic rules can prevent many, but not all, accidents.
- You also need to train pedestrians to keep alert for forklifts and to take proper precautions to protect their own safety.

*Source: Daily Safety Advisor*