

Forklift Trucks

Forklift Trucks - Common Factors in Forklift Incidents

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What factors contribute to forklift truck incidents?

Many work-related factors, such as work organization, workplace design and mechanical conditions, can contribute to incidents. Grouping them into specific categories may help to analyze incidents and, eventually, to prevent them.

What factors of work organization can contribute to forklift truck incidents?

- Production factors such as speed or stress.
- Lack of proper tools, attachments and accessories.
- Improper assignment of forklifts and operators.
- Poor maintenance of forklifts.
- Age of forklifts.
- Lack of training or improper training of workers who have to operate forklift trucks.
- Improper blocking of wheels on semi-trailers or railway cars.

What factors related to forklift operation can contribute to incidents?

- Travelling at excessive speed.
- Riding with the load elevated.
- Improper backing-up techniques.
- Improper turning, braking or accelerating.
- Improper warnings to others about a forklift in use nearby.
- Poor communication during shared tasks or in shared spaces.
- Not being aware of the route to be travelled (e.g., narrow passages, obstacles, poor surface conditions, etc.).
- Riding or giving rides on forklift or load.
- Parking the forklift improperly.
- Horseplay; stunt driving; jerky, erratic driving.

How can workplace design contribute to forklift truck incidents?

- Narrow aisles.
- Crowded, cluttered aisles.
- Shelving that has components that could hit or intrude into the operator area.
- Obstructions at intersections and doors.
- Volume of traffic in the work area.
- Pedestrians who are walking and working in the general area of forklift operations.
- Other workplace conditions such as noise, inadequate ventilation, or poor lighting.
- Ramps or flooring with different surfaces.
- Condition of the loading dock.

What characteristics of the load create a hazard?

- Items are poorly stacked or piled on the pallet in a way that results in an unstable load.
- Pallets are in poor repair.

- Load is too heavy.
 - Load is unstable or blocking the operator's vision.
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What mechanical conditions or design features increase the risk of forklift incidents?

- Malfunction of brakes.
 - Malfunction of steering.
 - Malfunction of clutch, shift linkage, or transmission.
 - Malfunction of mast assembly.
 - Leaks in hydraulic systems or transmission.
 - Safety devices lacking, inadequate, or malfunctioning.
 - Emissions from forklifts.
 - Blind spots or obstructions blocking the driver's view.
 - Poor layout of controls and displays.
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How can incidents with pedestrians be reduced or avoided?

- Separate the pedestrian and forklift traffic by creating designated walkways or travel ways.
- Restrict people from entering areas where the forklift is operating. If not possible, develop safe work procedures to protect workers when they must enter areas where forklifts are operating.
- Keep a safe distance from the forklift whenever possible.
- Pedestrians should always let the driver know they are in the area. Make eye contact with the driver to ensure your presence is known.
- Make sure the area is well-lit and there are no obstructions.
- Be cautious near blind corners, doorways, and narrow aisles. Sound the forklift horn at intersections.
- Install mirrors at intersections.
- Use high-visibility clothing, where appropriate.
- Limit forklift travel speed.

- Install additional warning devices, such as lights or blinkers, where appropriate.
 - Do not walk near or under raised forks.
 - Do not load the forklift in a way that restricts the driver's viewing area.
 - Avoid driving forklift near areas where pedestrian traffic is high (e.g., lunch rooms, time clocks, entrances, exits).
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