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Forklift Hazards

Forklifts are useful tools when in the hands of trained workers, but can also present a health and safety hazard when misused. Keeping all personnel a safe distance away from working forklifts helps to prevent accidental injury or death. Forklift operators should be certain that loads are secured and balanced before lifting them.

Impact

Because a forklift is a machine that needs to be in motion to do its job, it has the potential to crash into things and people. This risk is increased if the forklift is poorly maintained and/or operated by an untrained or careless worker. The front tires on the forklift's can puncture or crush objects that they hit and have the potential to injure or kill a person. Forklifts can also crash into things while backing up, which is why most of them are fitted with beeping alarms to alert people around the machine that it is backing.

Dropping and Crushing

A load that is improperly balanced on the forklift's tines can fall, resulting in the destruction of objects and the injury or death of people that are underneath it. Large forklifts have the capacity to lift things 20 feet in the air, presenting a major hazard to anyone who is underneath the load. For this reason, people should never be allowed underneath a load that is being lifted by a forklift. Forklifts can drop loads while in motion as a result of the load being unbalanced, the forklift hitting something or the operator stopping the forklift too abruptly.

Running Over

Forklifts, like any wheeled vehicle, have the capacity to run someone over. Particularly when they are being backed up, and the driver's visibility is compromised, they should be operated with extreme caution. Forklifts should be fitted with rear-view mirrors, and their drivers properly trained in their use, to minimize the possibility that anything or anyone will be run over.

Emissions

Many forklifts are powered by propane. If they are run too extensively within an enclosed area, their emissions can create a health hazard to people in the building. Propane-powered forklifts should only be used outside, with electric forklifts used for interior spaces where people are breathing.

OSHA Forklift Safety www.safetyservicescompany.com