

## **Forklift Safety Facts**

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If you have forklifts in your operation, have your workers been properly trained to operate them? Have all the workers in your operation been made aware of the hazards that may exist when they are working in the vicinity of a forklift? It is vital to provide initial training to new forklift operators that are hired and to also provide recurring safety training that reinforces safe operating habits. Not only should you provide safety training to the forklift operators, but employers should also train all workers in how to work safely when forklifts are being operated in the work area. Many incidents have involved other workers who were not operating the forklift but were struck or run over by the machine. Deaths to workers on foot accounted for the second highest number of forklift-related fatalities according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The BLS reports that there are 100 fatalities and 20,000 serious injuries in the United States each year that involve forklifts. The BLS data has found that the most common forklift related fatalities are overturns (22%), workers on foot being struck or runover (20%), workers crushed by forklifts (16%), and falls from forklifts (9%). The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that inadequate training caused approximately 20% to 25% of these fatalities. The New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) offers on-farm forklift safety training sessions. The on-farm forklift safety training sessions are free of charge to farms and agricultural packing houses, as well as processing houses in the state of New York. This safety training can also be delivered in Spanish. These training sessions are supported from a grant from the New York State Department of Labor Hazard Abatement Board. In addition to providing education in good forklift safety practices, these training sessions can be used to help meet OSHA's Powered Industrial Truck (PIT 1910.178 (1)) regulations. OSHA regulations require that forklift operators be trained in how to operate safely.

### **Safety rules for forklift operators:**

- Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, for agriculture, minors under the age of 16 are prohibited from operating forklifts, in non-agricultural industries, youth under 18 are prohibited from operating forklifts.
- Always perform a complete operator's inspection of the forklift prior to using it. Correct any defects immediately before you use the forklift.
- Never exceed the lifting capacity of the forklift. Check the data plate on the forklift to find its rated capacities.
- Wear the seatbelt
- Never allow extra riders.
- Be very alert when moving the forklift, look out for bystanders and obstructions. Pedestrians have the right of way.
- Never allow anyone to walk under the raised forks.
- Sound the horn whenever approaching blind intersections, driving out of areas with obstructed vision, such as coolers or through doors, or prior to backing.
- The stability of the forklift decreases as the load is raised. Avoid tilting an elevated load forward until you get to the place where you need to unload.
- Never turn when operating on a slope, always go straight up and down. With a loaded forklift, keep the load pointed uphill. With an empty forklift, travel uphill in reverse.

- Always lower the forks to the ground when parking the forklift and set the parking brake.
- Do not smoke near a forklift that is being refueled.

**Safety rules for pedestrians or workers on foot:**

- Never get between a forklift and a wall or fixed object.
- Stay out of marked forklift travel paths.
- Never go underneath the raised forks.
- Always be alert to forklifts that are operating in your vicinity, the operator may not be aware you are there.
- Make sure the operator knows you are there before walking out in front or behind the forklift. Establish eye contact with the operator before walking in front or behind the machine.
- Never operate a forklift unless you have been properly trained.
- Never ride on a forklift.

In addition to forklift safety training, there are many more farm safety programs that we can conduct for you. If you need more information or wish to schedule an on-farm safety survey or on-farm safety training session, contact Jim Carrabba, Farm Safety Education Specialist at (800) 343-7527 ext 239 or e-mail [jcarrabba@nycamh.com](mailto:jcarrabba@nycamh.com). NYCAMH, a program of Bassett Healthcare Network, is enhancing agricultural and rural health by preventing and treating occupational injury and illness.