



Pedestrian Safety; 16 Things You Need to Know to Improve It.

When it comes to forklift safety, a lot of emphasis is placed upon safe forklift operation—as it should be. What we see quite frequently, though, is a lack of training for employees working in a warehouse situation but who do not operate forklifts but merely work around them all day, every day. Working around them without knowledge pertaining to their potential hazards creates a dangerous scenario for catastrophe.

We recommend formal classroom training for all of your facility employees who could encounter a forklift in the course of their responsibilities. This training should cover the following:

How forklifts and similar equipment operate: While operator training is not required, it is nevertheless important for employees to know the limitations of forklifts and their operators in a warehouse setting.

1. **Visibility:** The operator's vision is severely limited, especially when carrying a load. There are many other pitfalls of assuming that the operator is aware of the employee's presence.
2. **Eye contact:** Employees should try to make eye contact with an operator. This ensures that the operator is fully aware of the employee's presence. Busy operators may or may not be aware of the pedestrian, and any sudden move could result in a collision.
3. **Stopping:** A 7,000-lb. forklift carrying a 5,000-lb. load can not stop as quickly as a car, and if the operator slams on the brakes to avoid an employee, the employee could find 5,000 pounds of product hurtling in his direction.
4. **Keeping your distance:** Never approach a forklift from the rear. Keep beyond three feet of the side, and never stand in front of a forklift or on the forks. This keeps the pedestrian safe should any sudden movement of the forklift occur.
5. **Forklifts cannot be heard:** Electric forklifts are completely silent, and even internal combustion units can approach without being heard in a busy, noisy facility. Be certain that all pedestrians understand this and are diligently LOOKING for lift trucks and equipment at all times, particularly at intersections.

The potential dangers of working around this equipment: Rear ends swing wide, loads can spill, toes can be run over, and many other dangers exist if the employee is not cognizant of how to behave around a forklift. Lift trucks present a number of dangers. The operators are aware of these hazards, but pedestrians often consider forklifts benign pieces of equipment.

6. **Falling loads:** When walking near a lift truck depositing or retrieving a load at various heights, a pedestrian should know that loads can tumble down. The pedestrian should avoid the area at all costs.
7. **Wide swings:** The rear of the forklift can swing quickly to one side or the other, resulting in collision with a pedestrian or running over feet.

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8. **Weight:** People rarely understand that forklifts are very heavy machines that cannot stop quickly. A collision often results in serious injury and sometimes death. Pedestrians need to understand this and respect the potential dangers.
9. **Proper use:** Pedestrians should know that they are not allowed to operate this equipment without proper training, even if it is to hop on a quickly moving lift truck to find the product they are seeking.
10. **Reporting:** Any unsafe conditions should be reported by pedestrians immediately to a supervisor. These include unsafe operation or conditions in the facility that create a potential for accident.

What you can do to minimize these potential dangers: As a manager or supervisor, you must ensure that each person entering your facility, whether he is another employee or a guest, understands these potential hazards and is alert for them when in your facility.

11. **Training and briefing:** Training pedestrians or employees who regularly enter your facility should be a requirement, whether the person is an employee, vendor, or other guest who is a regular visitor. If you have an occasional visitor, this guest should be briefed on what type of equipment you operate, how it operates, your safety procedures, and the need to be alert at all times.
12. **Install lanes and pedestrian islands:** Simple pedestrian lanes painted on the floor and training on how to use them are the ultimate scenario to protect pedestrians. Having protected islands for pedestrians to pack or perform other duties keeps them safe when working among forklifts.
13. **Lighting:** Provide adequate lighting in aisles and other areas to ensure maximum visibility.
14. **Set speed limits:** Finding the balance between maximizing productivity and creating a safe environment for employees is key. Aisle speeds and intersection speeds will vary and are different for each facility.
15. **Install mirrors at intersections:** Then, train employees and operators alike to use them to see what's coming around the corner.
16. **Ensure that all safety devices on all of your lift trucks are operational:** Items like back-up alarms, horns, and lights should be checked daily to ensure operational effectiveness.

It takes only a few seconds of inattentiveness for an accident to occur. Training, informing, and monitoring produce a safe work environment and minimize your bottom line exposure, should an accident occur. Visit our [Safety Training Page](#) to learn more about our safety training programs.

Have any questions about this article or forklift and pedestrian safety? Give us a call at 410-344-1801 or visit us on the web at www.matthaimaterialhandling.com.