

# Summaries of Selected Forklift Fatalities Investigated by OSHA

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## Selected Fatalities Investigated in 1998

- , EMPLOYEE STRUCK BY FORKLIFT: Employee #1, a clerk assigned to the marine terminal, was walking on the wharf alongside a container top lift machine. A forklift truck, with a squeeze attachment carrying two rolls of paper, was traveling in the same direction as employee #1. The forklift truck continued forward and apparently the load (which was approximately 11 inches higher than the steering wheel) obstructed the driver's forward view. He struck and crushed employee #1 beneath the load.
- , FORKLIFT TIPOVER: While an employee was operating a forklift, the forklift tipped over while the operator was apparently making a sharp turn at excessive speed. No seat belt was installed and when employee fell from the seat he was crushed by the rollover bar.
- , FALL FROM PLATFORM ON FORKLIFT: The victim (employee #1) was found pinned between the mast and the frame of the forklift. Prior to the accident, employee #1 was raised approximately 6 feet high by the forklift operator while the employee was standing on a pallet that was not secured to the frame of the forklift. The operator left the forklift unattended while the employee was on the pallet pouring spice into a mixing tank.
- , CRUSHED BY FORKLIFT: Victim was driving a stand up forklift into a tractor trailer to start unloading when the truck driver pulled away from the dock. The forklift fell back onto the forklift driver, striking his head, and apparently breaking his neck.
- , STRUCK BY FORKLIFT: The employee was given instructions to take the forklift to unload a truck. The employee picked up the forklift located on the premises less than one half mile from where the accident occurred. Traveling down an incline, the employee attempted to make a left turn into a parking lot, struck a pothole in the road, and the forklift began to tip over to the right. The employee attempted to jump clear of the forklift, but was struck and killed as the forklift fell.
- , STRUCK BY FORKLIFT: The victim was assigned as the scrap dumpster forklift operator and was in route to a dumpster located in the remote southeast section of the outside material storage area. The victim was utilizing a forklift rated at 4500 pounds. A metal dump hopper, equipped with a manual dump release handle, was attached to the forks of the forklift. The hopper was filled with scrap shingles. The victim positioned the load above the north side of the dumpster. He dismounted from the right side of the forklift, closest to the north wall of the dumpster, and tripped the dump handle of the hopper. As he dismounted, he failed to set the parking brake. As the load suddenly dropped, apparently the forklift jerked, causing the transmission, low on fluid, to slip into

drive, and the right rear side of the forklift to travel toward the dumpster, pinning the victim against north wall of the dumpster. A crushing chest injury resulted. The primary cause of the accident was that the employee failed to set the parking brake prior to dismounting the powered forklift.

STRUCK BY LOAD TOPPLING FROM FORKLIFT: A longshoreman was crushed when he was struck by a toppling load of fiber-board. This cargo had just been off-loaded from a ship and was on the dock awaiting transfer by forklift to an adjacent warehouse. The forklift intended to pick up a stack of three crates. The width of the crates had changed from previous loads to more narrow gauge. The forklift operator did not realize he was dealing with a more narrow cargo which allowed his forks to extend beyond the intended cargo's base. The forks extended some 10 inches under the base of an adjacent stack of three crates which was some 31 inches wide. When the operator raised his forks he not only picked up his intended load, but caused the adjacent stack of crates to topple onto the nearby longshoreman.

FALL FROM FORKS: Two employees were riding the load which was tied onto the forks of a forklift. The load was being lifted additionally with the aid of a crane. The men were standing on the load as it was lifted about 23 feet in the air, above packed dirt. The load shifted and slipped off the forks, propelling the two men off the load. One man was seriously injured and the other died of his injuries.

STRUCK BY FORKLIFT: Operator was driving a forklift forward with a load on the forks which obstructed his view. The operator did not see the employee walking by and struck her.

FORKLIFT TIPOVER: An employee was driving an unloaded forklift down a ramp with a 13% slope when the forklift started to tip over. The operator attempted to jump clear and the ROP of the forklift landed on him and killed him. The employee was not wearing the supplied seatbelt.

STRUCK BY: The operator of a sit-down forklift (Forklift #1) was in the process of delivering a pump to the drum/bleach line, unaware he was being followed by the operator of a stand-up forklift (Forklift #2). The operator of Forklift #1 received a page to turn off a valve, in route to deliver the pump. Parking his forklift next to three pallets of materials without lowering the forks, he went to answer the page. The distance between Forklift #1 and Forklift #2 was less than the required three truck lengths. In addition, there was insufficient passage in the aisle way and the presence of water leaking from a steam pipe in the area. Having nowhere to maneuver, and little traction because of the wet floor, Forklift #2 collided with the parked Forklift #1. The right fork of Forklift #1 stabbed into the left leg of the operator of Forklift #2. The operator of the Forklift #2 was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital.

## **Selected Forklift Fatalities Investigated in 1997**

**FORKLIFT TIPPED OVER WHILE BEING TOWED:** An employee was behind the wheel of a forklift being towed by a pick-up truck operated by another company employee when the operator lost control of the forklift. The forklift veered from the roadway into a ditch, pinning the operator underneath. Prior to the accident the forklift was operational and was being driven with the forks forward, on a newly paved two lane roadway. The employee in the truck caught up with the forklift, and the two employees decided that they could get the forklift back to town faster and get the operator out of the cold weather by towing the forklift. Together they attached a tow strap to the counterweight of the forklift and began to tow the forklift down the road at approximately 15 to 18 miles per hour, with the steering wheel to the front and the forks to the rear. At some point thereafter, the operator lost control of the forklift and it veered from the roadway into a ditch along side of the road and flipped, eventually landing on its side with the operator pinned underneath. The forklift was not equipped with seatbelts.

**FALL FROM FORKLIFT PLATFORM:** The victim fell approximately 17 feet from an improper work platform while raised on a 3-stage industrial truck (forklift). The work platform used was a wooden appliance pallet placed on the top edge of the squeeze clamps used to move appliances by vertically squeezing them. The victim fell from the pallet head first, landing on the concrete below when the lift operator started to lower the platform.

**FORKLIFT TIPOVER:** The victim/operator drove a forklift down a ramp rapidly and appeared to be attempting to make a sharp left turn. The forklift overturned. Apparently, the employee was unaccustomed to the quickness and sharp turning radius of the new forklift. The victim was not wearing the provided seatbelt. The driver/victim was dislodged from the seat and his head was caught under the overhead protective cage.

**FALL FROM FORKLIFT PLATFORM (PALLET):** The employee was in the process of pulling orders from the top shelf of the storage racks in the warehouse area of the grocery store. He was on the raised forks of the forklift on a wooden pallet. Neither he nor the pallet were secured to the forks. The forklift operator was moving along the aisle next to the racks when he hit something with the tire next to the shelf and the forklift stopped suddenly. The employee on the pallet was standing on the front edge of the pallet facing towards the back of the lift. The sudden stop threw him and he fell to the concrete floor hitting his head. The pallet and most of the products remained on the forklift. The victim died the following day from head injuries.

**FALL FROM LADDER STRUCK BY FORKLIFT:** Employee #1, an inventory control person, was standing on a step of a portable stairway stand placed against and parallel to a rack containing rolls of carpeting. Another employee (Employee #2) was operating a forklift with a pole attached to the front on which had been placed a roll of carpeting.

When the forklift operator (Employee #2) turned a corner from one aisle to another, the roll caught the rear leg of the stairway stand. This jostled Employee #1 and he fell three feet to the concrete floor, landing on his back and then his head struck the floor. He received head injuries and died twenty days later.