

Forklift accident investigation report

I'm not robot!

A warehouse worker was using a stand-up forklift to stock inventory in the tire warehouse where he worked. He was driving an unloaded forklift and had just exited an aisle of the warehouse at the dock end of the facility, at which time he believed that he was about to collide with a building support column. He decided to jump from the operator compartment, and in the process of jumping, the worker was unable to jump clear of the collision and was instead caught between the forklift and the column, resulting in crushing injuries. After the incident, proper function of the forklift was at issue.In my accident investigation of this incident, I took various steps to collect relevant facts and information about the forklift and the incident itself:I conducted a site inspection of the dock area of the warehouse, the stand-up forklift and the column.I conducted operational tests of the unloaded stand-up forklift, including analysis of drive speed and braking distance.I reviewed documents including, OSHA 1910.178 Powered Industrial Trucks forklift regulations, the ANSI 56.1 Safety Standard for Low Lift and High Lift Trucks, and manuals for the forklift.I also reviewed incident reports, witness accounts, service records, and training information.Braking is an important function of any forklift, and proper braking ensures a high level of safety for both the operator and other people working nearby. As such, it is critical to maintain forklift brake systems and too frequently check brake operation. I tested the forklift to assess the stopping distance when being operated at top speed, and it came to a complete stop in less than seven (7) feet. I measured the distance between the end of the aisle and the column that was struck as thirty-eight (38) feet. Additionally, my review of service recommendations and service records showed that the forklift was serviced by an outside vendor at regular intervals, which included operational and brake testing. In fact, service had been performed less than two (2) weeks before the incident, with no problems found. Daily brake checks were also performed by the forklift operators in the warehouse, per the operator's manual. There was no history of any brake problems or repairs for the forklift.I concluded, through my investigation, that the braking system of the forklift was functioning properly at the time of the incident, and that no brake defect or malfunction was causal to the incident. The clear distance of thirty-eight (38) feet between the end of the aisle and the column that was struck gave more than enough space for the forklift operator to maneuver and avoid hitting the column or safely stop before colliding with it, assuming that the forklift operator was following safe and proper driving procedures. The act of jumping from the forklift compartment raised another issue pertaining to the forklift operator, in that proper training dictates that it is safer to ride out a forklift collision than to risk injuries being in a position to be struck by the forklift. There are approximately one million active forklifts in the United States. It is estimated that 11% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident each year*. Organizations like OSHA set regulations to make working conditions as safe as possible, but accidents still happen as a result of improper training, distracted operators, and malfunctioning equipment. I in 6 workplace deaths involve a forklift Forklifts account for around 85 deaths every year 34,900 serious injuries result from forklift accidents annually Non-serious injuries related to forklift accidents reach 61,800 each year Being crushed by an overturning forklift accounts for 42% of forklift deaths each year In their useful life, 90% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident. (this assumes only one accident per forklift, with the useful life of a truck being about 8 years) If companies implemented more stringent training policies, OSHA estimates that about 70% of forklift accidents in the US could be prevented. 10 Common Forklift Accidents and How They Can Be Prevented Poorly trained drivers Training is the first step in forklift safety. Not knowing how the forklift works or proper protocol for carrying loads is an accident waiting to happen. Additionally, new inventory, obstacles, changes in floor gradient, or nearby pedestrians can all cause problems for inexperienced operators. -- FIX: Provide training - OSHA requires that every forklift operator be trained and certified to operate a forklift, and the operator's performance be evaluated on the provisions of 1910.178(l)(3) every three years. Speeding Forklift drivers often become too comfortable and drive irresponsibly. Traveling too fast on a forklift shortens reaction time and leads to accidents. OSHA advises drivers to stay at or below 5 miles per hour.-- FIX: Slow down - Post speed limit signs around the facility, and make sure forklift drivers know the rules and follow them. Operating a forklift with an elevated load This happens much too often. Driving with an elevated load makes it hard to see, the forklift harder to control, and can cause crashes or the forklift to tip.-- FIX: Keep forks low - OSHA regulations encourage drivers to carry loads as near to the ground as possible, approximately 4 inches from the floor. Improper turning Regardless of load, forklifts can tip. They turn with the rear wheels which causes the rear end to swing outward, increasing the chance of tipping during tight turns. -- FIX: Slow down for turns - Turning a corner too fast can cause the forklift to tilt. To avoid tipping, slow down before the turn and maintain a gradual speed through the entire rotation. Insufficient warnings and markings Marking forklift zones is paramount to safety, especially where both forklift and foot traffic are present. Prevent accidents by warning employees and visitors with ample signs and floor markings. -- FIX: Mark your facility - Floor tape and floor signs are the most efficient option for marking forklift zones due to ease of application and durability. Mark aisles, pedestrian walkways, ledges, traffic flow, and hazard areas. Giving rides or riding on the forklift It may seem harmless, but riding anywhere on the forklift or forklift load that is not a proper seat can be extremely dangerous. It's never a good idea to ride on the forks or use body parts to balance loads. -- FIX: Only ride in proper seats - Never ride on the forklift anywhere that is not a proper seat. In addition, wear a seatbelt if one is provided. Workplace design Consider workplace design when purchasing a forklift. Make sure the forklift is appropriate for the space it will be used in. If there is minimal aisle space, invest in a narrow-aisle forklift. Layout plays a big role in forklift safety. -- FIX: Maintain a safe area for forklift operation - Keep doors and intersections clear of obstructions Remove clutter from aisles Mark forklift areas with wall signs and floor markings Warn drivers of changing floor gradients and ramps Maintain a clean loading dock Load blocks vision Even when operating a forklift safely and carrying a load as low as possible, vision can often be impaired which may cause accidents with pedestrians or infrastructure. -- FIX: Drive backwards - If you cannot see past the load, drive the forklift backwards. Unbalanced or insecure loads. Another major cause of forklift tipping is uneven and insecure loads. Things can go sideways fast when a load is unbalanced -- FIX: Balance and tighten loads + angle forks up - When loading the forklift, make sure the load is secure and balanced on the forks. For additional safety, angle the forks up. Forklift mechanical failure Given the weight of the forklift and it's loads, a mechanical failure can cause major accidents and injury. -- FIX: Inspect the forklift regularly - At the beginning of each shift, follow a forklift inspection checklist to make sure it is in safe working condition. More Forklift Safety Tips Forklift Parking When not in use, park the forklift in designated forklift parking areas Wear PPE Wear appropriate PPE. Hard hats and reflective vests are often required in forklift areas. Set the e-brake The average forklift weighs 9000 lbs. A runaway forklift can cause major damage. Set the e-brake! Many accidents can be prevented with training, proper floor marking, safety signs, and forklift operators using caution and following rules set in place for your facility. Resources 20Industry/Forklift%20Fatalities.htm Similar Infographics Additional Resources If you're involved in a car accident, you should call the local police or sheriff's office. Most states require drivers to call the police when an accident causes injuries or vehicle damage over a certain dollar amount. In any case, a trained law enforcement officer can be an invaluable source of help and information in such a confusing situation. An officer can: provide or call for emergency medical care (of course, when someone has serious car accident injuries, you should call 911 as soon as possible, before calling the police) protect the accident scene, and investigate and document the potential cause of the accident. When You Should Call The Police After a Car Accident If you have any doubt about whether you should call the police after a car crash, it's better to err on the side of caution and file a police report. Most states require drivers to call the police in certain situations, including: when anyone is injured, or property damage exceeds the state's threshold. You should call the police when you think the other driver is at fault for the accident or might have committed a traffic violation. Car Accident Police Reports In cases involving injuries, substantial damage to the vehicles, or motor vehicle law violations, the officer will prepare a police report in connection with the crash. Make sure to get the name and badge number of the officer and the police agency that the officer represents so you can get a copy of the accident report after it's written (see below). Get the report number if it's available. You might have to pay a small fee to get the report, but it's worth it. Everyone involved in a car insurance claim and a car accident lawsuit relies heavily on the police report. Police reports typically document any physical evidence (like tire marks) at the scene of an accident and any witness statements. The report will list what traffic citations, if any, an officer issued and maybe even the officer's opinion about who caused the accident. In other words, police reports are powerful evidence that can help you speed up the insurance claims process or win your lawsuit in court. The fastest way to get a copy of a police report is to request it from the investigating officer's agency, typically the local police department, sheriff's office, or state highway patrol. Call the traffic division and provide them with the report number if you have it or your name and the date, time, and location of the accident. You might have to pay a small fee to get the report. If you are willing to wait, you might be able to get a free copy of the police report from the insurance adjuster who is handling your claim. If You Are in a Fender-Bender With No Injuries Should you still call the police even if your accident is just a minor one? The answer is usually yes. Even after a minor accident, a police officer can help you sort things out, and document what happened in case your situation changes in the future. For example, the other driver might seem friendly and cooperative at the scene and then deny all responsibility later. Or your accident injuries might not show up right away. Call the police department's non-emergency line and ask a dispatcher for advice. If the police decline to come to the scene of your minor accident, you can go to the nearest police station and file a report yourself after you exchange information with the other driver. If there are any witnesses, get their names and contact information as well. Make a note of the exact location of the accident and how it happened. If you can, take pictures of the vehicles and the scene from multiple vantage points. Learn more about what to do after a car accident. If the Law Enforcement Agency Tells You to Just Exchange Information If you call the police, and they tell you to just exchange information with the other driver, what information should you exchange? At a minimum, make sure you get from the other driver(s)—and that the other driver(s) get from you—all of the following information: full name and contact information insurance company and policy number driver's license and license plate number, and type, color, and model of vehicle. If the driver's name is different from the name of the insured, establish what the relationship is and take down the name and address for each person. Ask to see documents from which you can copy this information, such as a driver's license and an insurance verification card. Why? Sometimes, people—like drivers who don't have car insurance—give false information. If the other driver won't let you verify information, call the police and insist that the driver stay until the police arrive. If you are suspicious about the information you are getting, call the other driver's insurance company from the scene of the accident to verify for yourself that the other driver has given you accurate information. But only verify coverage. Don't give accident details to the other driver's insurance company. Not yet. You can do that when you get away from the scene of the accident and have had a chance to calm down and talk to your own insurer. Should You Wait for the Police to Arrive? If you call the police after a minor car accident, it might take an hour or more for an officer to arrive. It's important to wait for them. While you are waiting, you should: Once a police officer arrives, only talk to the officer about the specifics of your accident. Provide the information that the officer requests, but say no more. Remember, any statement you make could end up in the police report and be used against you in your insurance claim or in court. A Car Accident Lawyer Can Help You After you notify the police, be sure to notify your insurance company that you were involved in a car accident. The law might not require it, but your insurance policy almost certainly does. Dealing with the police and insurance companies can be stressful and intimidating. You might want to hire a lawyer to do it for you. Learn more about how an attorney can help with your car accident claim. When you're ready, Nolo's directory can help you find the right auto accident lawyer.

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