

Forklift Safety

Summary

1. Forklifts are used to move, raise or lower objects stored in containers or on pallets.
2. These vehicles improve workplace productivity and minimize manual handling of goods and objects by employees.
3. Each year in the United States, there are approximately 100 fatalities and 20,000 serious injuries directly resulting from forklift truck incidences (NIOSH).
4. Worker injuries mainly occur as a result of falls, rollovers, collisions and crushing incidences.
5. There are strict standards regarding forklift training, operation and maintenance.
6. The OSHA and NIOSH pages in our Essential Links section comprehensively outline regulations that apply to forklifts, and should be considered required reading.

Related Examinetics Services

- Forklift

Overview

The manufacturing, industrial, agricultural and warehousing industries rely on forklifts in the workplace. Forklift trucks are used to move, raise or lower objects stored in containers or on pallets. Their use helps to improve workplace productivity and reduces the need for excessive manual handling of goods and objects by employees. However, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, there are around 100 fatalities and 20,000 serious injuries each year in the United States as a result of forklift accidents.

Forklift operator safety

There are numerous types of forklifts. They differ in terms of load capacities, center of gravity and other parameters. Worker injuries mainly occur as a result of falls, rollovers, collisions and crushing incidents.

Operator falls can result as the worker ascends or descends into the driver cab or is ejected from the vehicle in the event of a collision. Forklift may overturn as a result of overload, unequal center of gravity or travel across uneven surfaces causing the vehicle to topple. Without adequate preventive measures, pedestrian co-workers are at risk from forklift collisions or accidents associated with unsafe loads.

Regulatory issues

There are strict standards in relation to forklift training, operation and maintenance. In non-agricultural industries, people under 18 years of age are not permitted to operate a forklift. All forklift operators must undergo both theoretical and practical training and are required to undertake refresher courses. Powered industrial trucks must also comply with standards as defined in the American National Standard for Powered Industrial Trucks (ANSI B56.1-1969).

The OSHA standards that employers and employees must follow are stated in the General Industry Standards, in particular "Powered Industrial Trucks" (1910.178), standards for Marine Terminals (29 CFR 1917 Subpart C, Cargo Handling Gear and Equipment), and Longshoring (29 CFR 1918 Subpart G, Cargo Handling Gear and Equipment Other Than Ship's Gear). There are other directives and regulations that employers should be aware of. The OSHA and NIOSH pages, as identified in our Essential Links section, comprehensively outline regulations for employers and employees.