

SAFETY MEETING TOPIC: Forklift Safety - Warehouse and Dock Operations

An accident in a warehouse can injure you or your co-workers, damage equipment, and ruin cargo. It is a potential for a multiple loss. The most common warehouse accidents involve forklifts and manual material handling.

The forklift is one of the most important mechanical devices you have. It can also be one of the most dangerous if not properly used. Statistics show that forklifts are involved in only about 1% of lost time accidents, yet they account for about 10% of the serious injuries. Some of those injuries occur when:

- A forklift strikes a pedestrian.
- A load falls on a pedestrian or the driver.
- A forklift falls between a trailer and dock or off a truck.
- A forklift turns over.

The key to forklift safety is your skill in operating the equipment, your ability to anticipate hazards in the warehouse and your concentration regarding the task at hand.

You can prevent traffic incidents while operating the forklift, by using the same safe practices that apply to traffic driving. Observe the rules regarding speed, maneuvering, and loading and unloading. Keep your arms and legs inside the guard and wear your seatbelt. The seatbelt will keep you inside the forklift in the event it tips over. Odds are you won't be able to jump clear! Unfortunately too many people have tried...unsuccessfully.

The dock plate is all that is between you and an accident when transferring cargo between a trailer and the dock. Damaged plates should not be used. Check for cracks or if curbs are missing or broken, report it. Makeshift plates should not be used, not even for a one-time job. Make sure the plate is properly anchored in place before loading or unloading.

The trailer can also contribute to an accident. The impact of lift trucks moving in and out can cause the trailer to inch away from the dock. Trailers should be chocked and frequently checked to insure they have not shifted. When the trailer is parked, jacks should be placed to prevent the trailer from tipping over.

As a pedestrian in the warehouse, stay clear of moving loads. When palletized cargo is being picked up, it can topple. Be alert. The rear of a forklift swings wide, since the steering axle is in the rear. So stay clear, and give the equipment plenty of room to maneuver.

Before you attempt to lift, move or shift heavy items in the cramped confines of a trailer, assess the situation. Do you need assistance from one of your co-workers, or do you need mechanical assistance from a forklift? Without assistance, you may injure your back or damage the cargo.

Take care. Don't be trapped into having an accident.

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