



Pedestrian Safety Around Forklifts Accident Prevention Alert

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to protecting workers from fatal and life-changing events.

Eastern Alliance is here to help. To learn more about Eastern's N3L3 program and access other safety resources, sign in and visit the Safety Tools on www.easternalliance.com, or contact your Risk Management Consultant for assistance

1.855.533.3444



A recent incident involving a pedestrian being struck by a forklift highlights both the present risk, and the severity of what can happen in your workplace when using forklifts, powered pallet jacks, order pickers, scissors lifts, or other mobile equipment. This alert will offer suggestions on what you can do to prevent this type of fatal and life-changing injury from occurring in your facility.

EVENT:

Two jobs were being completed simultaneously in the same work area.

1. A forklift operator was in the process of moving a load from inside the building to an outside trailer.
2. An employee was shoveling debris around a dumpster located near the building entrance.

After the forklift operator picked up a load, he looked over his right shoulder and did not see any pedestrians. When he looked over his left shoulder, his vision was obstructed slightly by the forklift's propane tank but did not see any pedestrians behind him. Meanwhile, the employee was bent over scooping debris. As the operator backed up, the forklift pushed the employee to the ground and ran over the employee's ankles. When the operator heard a scream, the forklift operator pulled forward, running over the employee's ankles a second time magnifying the extent of the injuries.

Lessons Learned:

- Clearly identify traffic routes for both forklifts and pedestrians. It may be necessary to observe traffic patterns to identify the best layout of the workplace to reduce forklift and pedestrian interaction. In this case, there were no limitations to where a forklift or pedestrian could go in the building.
- Create "pedestrian-only" walkways. Do not permit employees to use overhead bay doors to gain access into and out of buildings. All employees should use doorways.
- Have pedestrians wear high-visibility vests when working near forklift and pallet jack operations.



Image source: iStock.com

This information is proprietary and is intended to assist you in your safety efforts. It must not be assumed that every unsafe condition or procedure has been covered in this document, nor that every possible loss potential, and legal violation has been identified herein. This document is not a substitute for the establishment of risk management programs by your management.



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- Consider the adoption of a “buffer zone” or “safety zone” policy around all forklifts and pallet jacks of at least 4 feet (or more) in all directions. A four-foot radius “NO Pedestrian” approach zone is a best practice to keep forklifts from running over feet.
- Verify forklift operators are traveling in the direction of their best available visibility. Install convex mirrors at blind intersections.
- As part of your screening process for the position, ensure those candidates do not have physical restrictions that would prevent them being able to turn their head sufficiently to visualize 360 degrees from the operator’s seat, proper depth perception, or ability to see in changing light conditions.
- Reinforce the importance of making eye contact between the pedestrian and operator before crossing paths.
- Consider the use of motion-sensing overhead doors or pull cord activated gates that force forklift drivers to come to a stop at pedestrian crosswalks.
- A best practice is to provide awareness training to non-operators (i.e., visitors, office staff, etc.) about hazards of forklift operations. Educate on the swing radius of a forklift, overall weight, solid rubber tires, and non-impact absorbing design (how it differs from a passenger car).
- The propane cylinder on forklifts can cause blind spots to nearby objects / persons. Ensure back up alarms are functioning as part of the daily inspection process. An electric forklift may be an option to gain better visibility.
- Document pre-use inspections. Having defined safety checks prior to each use / each shift can help identify forklifts and pallet jacks needing maintenance before they cause injury.



Image source: iStock.com

Understand that there will be limitations to the single layer protective measures used by many businesses such as, back up alarms, sounding horns at intersections, etc. All of these rely on humans to either initiate the warning (operator) or respond appropriately (pedestrian reaction). Strengthen your safety processes by adding layers of protection. Each of these bullets would be considered a layer. The more layers you have the better you are protecting your employees from fatal and life-changing events.

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