

Laborer Suffers Traumatic Brain Injury when Struck by Load Falling from Forklift

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-167-2018s

REPORT DATE: February 27, 2018

INCIDENT DATE: June 22, 2017

VICTIM: 37 years old, 4 years with employer

INDUSTRY: Post-Harvest Crop Activities
(potato grower, packer, and shipper)

OCCUPATION: Laborer

SCENE: Packing plant

EVENT TYPE: Struck by forklift load



A 37-year-old laborer at a potato packing plant suffered a severe traumatic brain injury when he was struck by a piece of metal falling from a load being moved by a forklift.

The victim had been employed for four years as a general laborer at his employer's potato packing and shipping plant.

On the day of the incident, the victim and another laborer were assisting their foreman who was operating a forklift to move a staircase platform.

The metal platform with a staircase on either end was to be lifted, moved, and placed over a potato conveyor. The two staircases attached to the 6-foot platform had different numbers of steps: one staircase had 6 steps and the other 4 steps.

The foreman began moving the staircase platform with the forklift, but it was unbalanced, and tilting to the side, so he asked the two laborers to stand on the staircases on either end to balance the load. The laborers got on to the staircases and the foreman picked up the load and began moving again.

After about 20 feet, the forklift wheel hit a piece of angle iron on the floor that caused the forklift to stop suddenly. The staircase platform tilted to the side and fell off the forklift forks. Both workers fell about 8 feet to the floor. Several metal decking panels came off the platform and one struck the victim on the head.

He suffered a serious traumatic brain injury and has been unable to return to work.

INJURY NARRATIVE



Photo 1. Incident forklift

INJURY NARRATIVE



Photo 2. Staircase platform positioned over a potato conveyor after the incident. Arrows indicate where the forks were placed to make the lift.

INJURY NARRATIVE



Photo 3. Metal platform decking panel. The platform had 3 of these panels. When the staircase platform fell off the forklift forks, one of these panels came off the platform and struck the victim on his head.



Photo 4



Photo 5

The platform access staircases had different numbers of steps. Photo 4 shows the staircase with 6 steps and photo 5 shows the 4 step staircase. The two laborers stood one on each staircase to help balance the load as it was lifted and moved by the forklift.

INJURY NARRATIVE

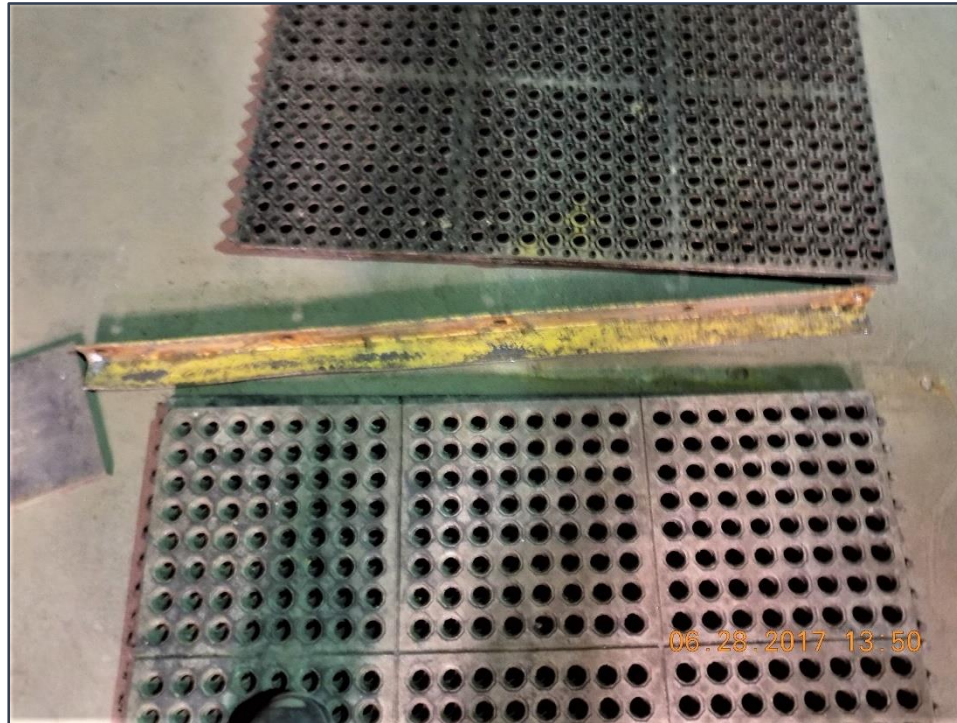


Photo 6. Piece of angle iron on the floor that caused the forklift to stop abruptly, destabilizing the forklift's load of the staircase platform, causing it to fall off the forks.

Requirements

- Employers must not allow people to ride on powered industrial trucks unless a safe place to ride is provided. See [WAC 296-307-52031\(3\)](#)
- All loads must be stable or safely arranged. Exercise caution when handling off-center loads that cannot be centered. See [WAC 296-307-52043\(1\)](#)

Recommendations

- Develop and implement standard safe loading procedures for forklifts and ensure that workers follow the procedures.
- Workers should never stand on, under, in front of, or near a load being lifted and carried by a forklift.

Resources

Powered Industrial Trucks (Forklifts). Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.

www.ini.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/PoweredIndustrialTrucks

Powered Industrial Trucks (Forklifts), Load Handling: Load Composition. OSHA.

www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/operations/loadcomposition

This bulletin was developed to alert employers and employees of a serious traumatic injury to a worker in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the injury.

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