

Worker Crushed Between Two Forklifts

About a half an hour after lunchtime, a forklift operator at a warehouse facility parked his forklift in front of a plastic wrap machine on the floor of the warehouse. He got out of the forklift and stood next to it to fill out some paperwork, with his back towards the rest of the warehouse.

At the same time, a second forklift operator was backing out of a nearby row of pallets after dropping off his load. He looked over his right shoulder only and turned the wheel to the left while reversing. As he did, he backed into the standing forklift operator, pinning him between the two forklifts.

Initially, the second operator didn't know he struck the victim, who was standing in his blind spot, because he did not look over both shoulders while backing. After he heard the two forklifts collide, he turned and saw the injured operator and pulled forward. The second operator helped the injured worker to the ground and yelled for someone to call 911.

Paramedics arrived and took the injured worker to the hospital. He suffered a sacral spine fracture and multiple pelvic fractures. He needed surgery to repair the fractures and spent time in a rehabilitation facility. He remained on modified duty for more than a year after the incident.

Upon investigation, it was determined that the employer taped plastic and cloth material around the forklift's back-up alarm to reduce noise.

What do you think went wrong?

In the space below, list some of the factors that you think could have contributed to this incident. Then, flip the page over for contributing factors and safety recommendations and requirements.

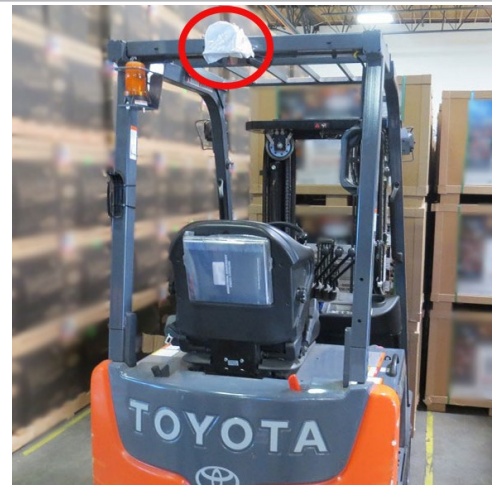


Figure 1: The employer placed white material and tape around the back-up alarm to reduce noise in the warehouse (red circle).

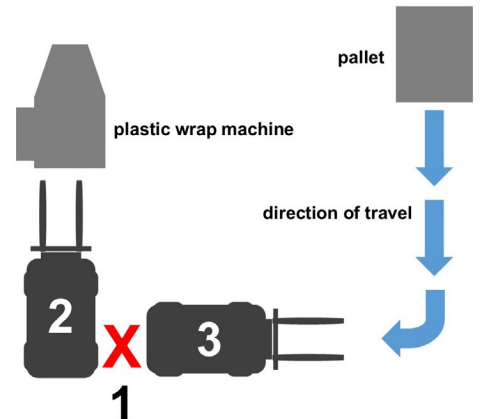


Figure 2: Diagram showing the location of the injured worker (1) when he was struck against his forklift (2) by the other operator's backing forklift (3).

Reporting: Employers are required to contact DOSH within eight hours of a workplace fatality or in-patient hospitalization of any employee. See [WAC 296-27-031](http://wac.wa.gov/296-27-031).

Contributing Factors

Unsafe forklift operation. The second forklift operator did not look in the direction he was traveling. He only looked over one shoulder while he was backing up and did not use his horn to notify other workers he was backing.

Reduced noise from back-up alarm. The employer had taped plastic and cloth material around the forklift's back-up alarm to muffle the signal noise.

Standing with back to warehouse traffic. The injured operator was standing next to his forklift facing away from the warehouse and was not able to see oncoming forklifts.

Recommendations

Plan for safety. Where possible, separate pedestrians from forklift traffic. Designate specific areas for parking forklifts and other work away from areas where forklifts are operating. Train forklift operators and pedestrians to pay attention to one another when working in the same area.

Utilize safety features. Always use manufacturer-installed safety devices, including back-up alarms, and keep them in working condition. Reduce music volume and other noises in the facility so that back-up alarms can be heard.

Perform spot checks. Employers should perform daily spot checks to ensure their workers are operating forklifts safely and conduct re-training when necessary.

Requirements

- **Modifying or Altering Powered Industrial Trucks (PITs).** Employers must have written approval from the PIT manufacturer before making any modifications to the PIT that add extra parts not provided by the PIT manufacturer, eliminate any parts, or affect capacity or safe operation.

You must make sure any modifications or additions to the PIT are shown on the plates, tags, or decals to reflect any changes. See [WAC 296-863-20010](#)

- **Operate PITs safely.** Employers must make sure PIT operators look in the direction they are going and keep a clear view of their path of travel, and slow down and sound the horn at cross aisles and other locations where vision is obstructed. See [WAC 296-863-40010](#)

Resources

- Chapter 296-863 WAC: Forklifts and Other Powered Industrial Trucks—<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-863>
- Chapter 296-27 WAC: Recordkeeping and Reporting—<https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-27>
- OSHA Powered Industrial Trucks (forklift) eTool—<https://www.osha.gov/etools/powered-industrial-trucks/workplace>

Safety Training Sign-In (Print Name Legibly) Date: _____

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