

Forklift Safety: Challenges, Significance of Impact & Solutions

There is no question that forklift safety is a number one concern for fleet owners. Without proper systems in place, your company is at a high risk for accidents potentially damaging your facility, merchandise, equipment fleet, and worst of all – your employees. According to the US Bureau of Labor, “nearly 100 workers are killed and 20,000 are seriously injured in forklift-related accidents each year.” In Ontario, Canada 10,308 forklift-related incidents occurred between 1996 and 2008 according to data collected by the Occupational Health and Safety Council of Ontario (OHSCO).

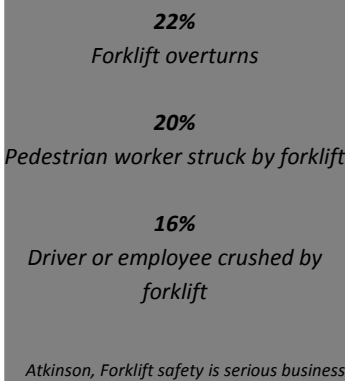
The well-being of your employees is of utmost concern, yet sometimes even outlining the safety procedures is not enough. Missteps can significantly impact your bottom line. With so much at stake, you cannot neglect a measureable and manageable solution.

Formal meetings stressing the importance of safety in the workplace is a good idea, but in order to secure compliance you must implement a more effective approach.

Overview of Forklifts & Forklift safety

In the 1920's companies in North America and Canada were expanding; by the 1930's industries developed a need for material handling and thus the forklift became an essential device (A Brief History of Forklifts). Lift trucks continued to progress in the workplace as did procedures to manage them. As beneficial as forklifts were to a company's overall production, they posed a significant threat to safety in the workplace. Well into the 20th Century, the issue of safety emerged to the surface of concern due to a combination of workers compensation laws, liability costs, news coverage, and labor unions. In 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in America and in 1978 the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) were established to ensure proper execution of safety precautions (The History of Industrial Safety). Industries trained their workers to comply with safety regulations and maintain a manual record of safety checklists. As companies continue to expand and technologies evolve, manual data tracking is becoming obsolete. Paper-based reports are often misplaced or do not provide thorough documentation; this can

Most Common Causes of Fatalities



Atkinson, Forklift safety is serious business

cause crisis if ever asked to present complete records of safety compliance.

After the establishment of safety administrations in America and Canada, incidents occur less often; however businesses are still struggling with safety compliance. To date, the main concerns are “workers being struck by falling objects, caught between or in parts of the vehicle, falling from elevated platforms, being struck by a lift truck, and lift trucks colliding or overturning. Crushing and amputations are the most worrisome (Lift Truck Safety).”

Businesses still experience fines amounting to millions of dollars. For CEO’s, CFO’s, warehouse managers and forklift operators alike, safety has found its way to the top of everyone’s priority list.

What exactly are the Standards?

Industries must adhere to standards broad in scope; OSHA’s performance based standard 1910.178 is specific for Powered Industrial Trucks and CCOHS’ _____. Compliance entails checking for oil leaks, hydraulic lines, tires for wear, and breaks prior to operation (How to Check a Forklift for Safe Use). In addition, every employee must be trained to operate the specific lift trucks they were hired to use. It is encouraged that the standard is understood in its entirety as training can be formatted to fulfill the safety criteria.

These regulations are critical to proper industrial functioning, yet companies find it challenging to ensure employees comply. The root of the problem could be that workers are not aware of the risks involved or perhaps its simple laziness; nevertheless you are not responsible for their reasoning. You are responsible for their actions. This is quite a bind: how can you account for and control the possible compliance violations? Before realizing your solution, the challenges must be outlined.

Challenges

- Compliance with Pre-use Safety Checklist
- Controlling forklift access to trained operators
- Tracking operators’ training expiration
- Identify operators who are often linked to accidents
- Track avoidable damage to facility and merchandise

**Forklift Fatalities: Indiana,
Illinois and Wisconsin alone
2005-06**

9

Struck by Falling Objects

4

Falls from Elevated Platform

6

Caught Between

3

Caught In

3

Struck Against

2

Overturn

1

Collision

Total: 28

- Kaletta, Lift Truck Safety

Solutions: What to look for

COMPLIANCE WITH PRE-USE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Paper-based systems were manageable in the past, but have become obsolete in this day-in-age. With businesses expanding in all directions, manual documentation of the pre-use safety checklist isn't optimal. Look for a comprehensive computer-based system that monitors responses to the checklist by each and every employee. This way, you can track the condition of the forklift to its specific operator. These systems should report data in real-time so you can guarantee your employees are completing the checklist thoroughly and properly.

Controlling Forklift Access

Ensuring that properly trained individuals are running your machines is fundamental to your operation. Investment in extensive training mustn't go to waste, thus you need to apply a system that limits access strictly to trained professionals. Grant your certified employees access cards to the appropriate equipment and require them to swipe the card pre-operation. Comprehensive software allows you to permit access to particular employees for the machines they are certified to operate.

Tracking Operators' Training Expiration

It is often difficult to monitor the specifics of each operator's mobile equipment certification. The strict safety guidelines do not grant any room for mistakes, so your company must employ a consistent and proactive system. The right system will record the details of employee training and expiration dates. Computer-based software will render the data into usable reports for complete understanding.

Identify Operators who are Often Linked to Accidents

Mobile fleet maintenance is expensive; unnecessary accidents significantly impact your bottom line. Find a solution that will easily track and manage these incidents. A system with an impact sensor will notify the appropriate authorities as soon as the detector alarms. A thorough solution will allow you to monitor relevant information such as type of impact, impact frequency, impact magnitude, time of impact, and name of operator. Proper data collection will ensure accountability in your workplace and encourage employees to follow proper guidelines carefully as they are held responsible for their oversights.

Track Avoidable damage to Facility and Merchandise

Software is available to monitor operator information, impact frequency, and damage history; alerts are issued to the appropriate

personnel for immediate action. It is important to find easy-to-use software to manage these instances and implement proper procedures immediately.

Remove yourself from the unnecessary bind of assuming the responsibility of all employees; with a proper system, workers are required to comply. With increased safety, comes increased productivity. Our world continues to develop and in turn industries expand in multiple ways; the evolution has set the stage for advanced management technologies.

Access Control Group is a leading provider of mobile asset management solutions. Vigilant G2 and Vigilant^{LT} are available as robust and affordable solutions to solve all of the challenges listed above and more. With the help of Vigilant G2, a large U.S. retail company achieved 97% safety compliance after many safety issues; with the electronic safety reports, site managers know the overall safety of their fleet. They experienced a 30% reduction in damage costs within the first four months of implementation.

The solutions offered by ACG are designed for you to be user-friendly, comprehensive, and affordable.



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Safety = increased productivity and better for economy