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Forklift Truck Tip Over Fatality

2 May 2022

A 31-year-old worker was driving a forklift truck loaded with a pallet of sheet metal in the yard of a manufacturing plant when it collided with a fixed object and overturned. The worker sustained fatal crush injuries.



The forklift involved in the incident.

Safety information

Every year forklift trucks are involved in workplace deaths and injuries resulting in substantial financial and human costs for workers, industry, and the community. The three main reasons workers are killed or seriously injured in forklift truck incidents are:

1. being hit or crushed by a forklift
2. being hit or crushed by a load that the forklift is moving
3. being crushed in a forklift tip-over.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

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Before operating a forklift truck, you:

- must hold a valid high risk work licence (HRWL) - class LF
- must review the manufacturer's instructions to ensure the forklift is operated safely in a manner for which it was designed
- must be trained on the specific type of forklift you are using so that you are familiar with the operating controls and understand any limitations
- should always conduct pre-start and operational safety checks to confirm the forklift is safe to operate
- must wear the required PPE ([personal protective equipment](#)) for the task you are undertaking and the environment you are working in
- must be fit for work. This includes not being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and ensuring you are adequately rested
- should inspect the work area to identify any potential hazards in the work zone
- should assess the load to determine if the forklift configuration is designed to lift the load or whether a lifting attachment is better suited to maintain control of the load.

When operating a forklift, you:

- must follow any site safety rules, traffic management plans and safety instructions including any site-specific [safe work method statements](#) for the work being undertaken
- must wear a seatbelt, unless a risk assessment indicates it's not safe to do so, and use all controls provided to prevent you being ejected from the forklift
- should drive at a safe speed, with respect to site speed limits, load size, ground, and weather conditions
- should avoid aggressive driving, braking, and steering, especially when turning
- should never turn sideways on ramps or other sloping surfaces
- ensure all loads are centred and secured
- must never overload the forklift
- should avoid driving with an elevated mast and load, unless you're picking up or putting away the load
- should lower the fork arms to ground level, apply the parking brake, and ensure the drive controls are in neutral if you need to alight from the forklift
- should turn off the ignition and remove the key if leaving the forklift unattended.

If the forklift does tip over, attempting to jump from it is likely to cause serious crush injuries or death. In the event of a forklift tip over, you should:

- remain seated and not lean out of the forklift
- brace your feet, hold tight and lean away from the point of impact.

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Businesses must:

- develop and implement safe systems of work
- ensure all workers operating a forklift have the appropriate HRWL and have received training on the type of forklift they are using
- not direct or allow a person who does not hold a HRWL to operate a forklift
- sight and hold a copy of the HRWL for all operators
- ensure the manufacturer's instruction manual is made available to operators
- ensure all forklifts and associated equipment are regularly inspected, serviced, and maintained as per the manufacturer's specifications
- ensure all operator protective devices installed on the forklift are maintained and used
- set up the workplace so that forklifts and people are separated, such as using barriers or guardrails
- ensure all workers and site visitors have completed a site induction
- clearly mark walkways and safe work zones
- ensure the forklift is fitted with warning devices to warn people of its movement
- ensure forklift operators only lift loads that are stable and secured on a pallet, or use an approved attachment if it is safer to do so
- ensure workers and all other people on site adhere to the traffic management plan and site safety rules
- ensure an emergency response procedure is developed and maintained, and all staff are trained in site safety procedures.

Related information

- [Code of practice – Managing the risks of plant in the workplace](#)
- [Workplace traffic management guidance material](#) - Safe Work Australia
- [Forklift safety information](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [High risk work licenses information](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [People working around forklifts – Safety guide](#) – SafeWork NSW
- [Traffic management guide – warehousing](#) - Safe Work Australia