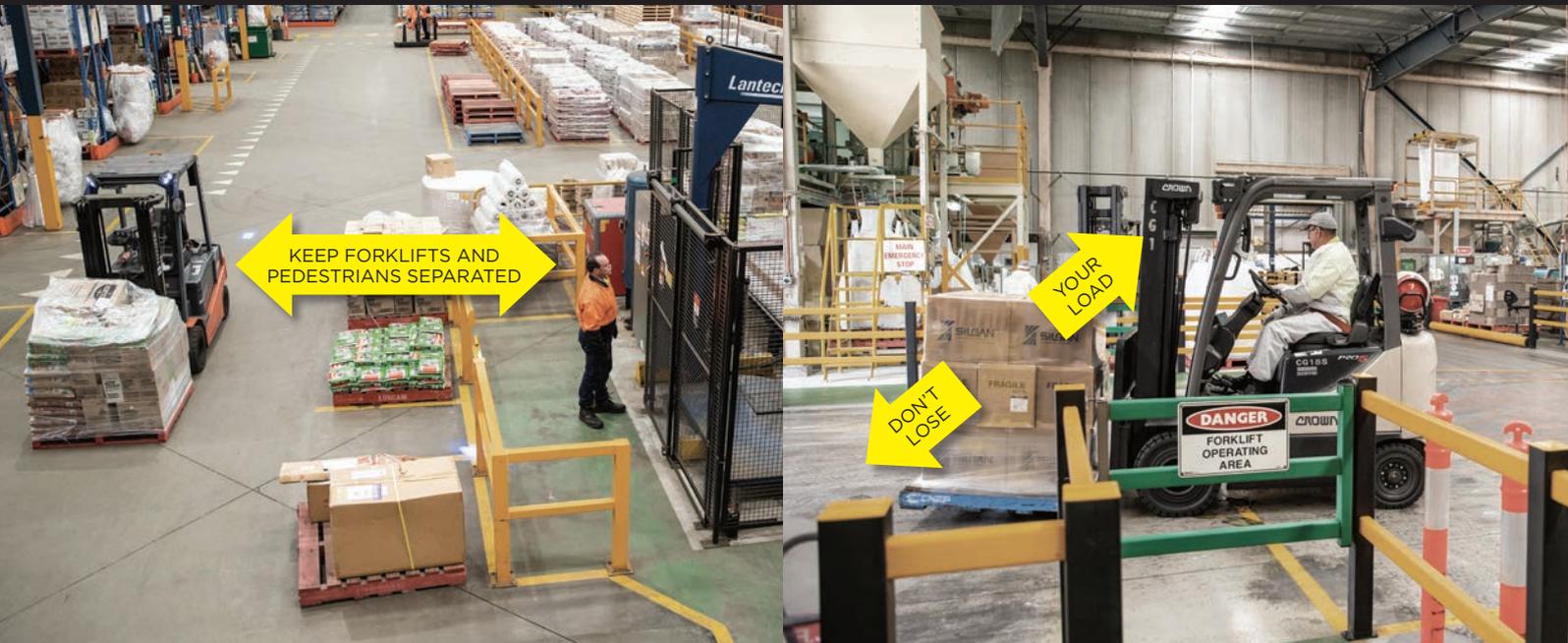


# FORKLIFT SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU.

## TOOLBOX TALKS



This guide will help you hold toolbox talks with your workers about the three main causes of forklift deaths and serious injuries in NSW, which are:

1. People being hit by a forklift
2. People or drivers being hit by the load a forklift is carrying or lifting
3. Drivers being crushed in a tip-over.

When it comes to working safely around forklifts, businesses are responsible for the health and safety of workers, contractors, volunteers, and any visitors to your site.

We have resources and guides about working safely with forklifts, which can be downloaded free from the SafeWork NSW website at [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au) or by calling 13 10 50.

These three toolbox talks will help you to start a safety conversation with your workers about forklifts.

### HOW TO SUPPORT SAFETY BEHAVIOUR IN YOUR WORKPLACE

To encourage worker safety behaviour:

- Talk about safety – hold regular safety talks, ask workers for feedback on hazards and safe work practices, and when you give work instructions include safety advice and directions
- Reward safe behaviour – set safety goals together, praise your workers when you see them working safely, give out a regular safe worker award
- Address unsafe behaviour
- Make it visual – hang safety posters, put safety guides in the lunch room or toilets, put up a safety chart to track incidents and near misses
- Lead by example – make sure you always work safely
- Keep training – show your workers how to work safely, remind them of safe work practices, give refresher training at least annually and following an incident or near miss, enrol them in a course
- Don't forget about visitors – make sure you also talk about safety with delivery drivers, contractors and other visitors to your workplace.

#### By law you must:

- Identify and act on any potential hazards
- Put systems in place for the safe use of forklifts
- Provide suitable information, training, instruction or supervision to keep workers safe
- Notify SafeWork NSW of all serious injuries/illnesses and dangerous incidents.

# TOOLBOX TALK ONE

## KEEP FORKLIFTS AND PEOPLE SEPARATED

Include these workers:

- Forklift drivers and others who work near moving forklifts.

### Preparation for the talk

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To prepare for the toolbox talk:

- Make sure there are barriers and/or clearly marked pedestrian walkways and safety zones in the workplace. See SafeWork Australia's **Workplace Traffic Management Guidance** material for more information <https://bit.ly/2WujQEE>
- Make sure you have internet access (i.e. phone or tablet) to show our forklift safety video
- Have a forklift (with a load on the forks) in a safe accessible place, making sure it is secure, with the ignition keys removed
- Have a pen and notebook to jot down any safety suggestions from workers
- Print out the SafeWork NSW Take Forking Safety Seriously guides for operators and people who work near forklifts.

### READ OUT

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#### Fact

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People are most at risk of being hit by a forklift if they are:

- Walking alongside it
- Picking stock off a nearby shelf
- Walking in between it and a truck
- Stepping into its path, or
- Assisting with loading/unloading.

### Case Study

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A large distributor was moving frozen product in the lead up to Christmas. The loading dock was much more crowded than usual, limiting visibility.

A worker entered the loading dock to check stock for a pickup later in the afternoon. As he was checking, he had his back turned to the freezer. A forklift came out of the freezer in reverse and hit the worker, causing serious lower leg injuries.

There were clearly marked walkways with barriers throughout most of the workplace; however, the stock could not have been checked from the walkway. The driver was wearing a hoodie and had earphones in listening to music. The forklift was fitted with a working reversing sensor, but it could not be heard over the sound of the freezers.

The forklift driver said he sounded his horn before reversing and was also looking behind but CCTV footage showed he was looking toward the front of the forklift.

### Ask your workers: What could have been done differently?

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Possible answers:

- Better staggering of product to prevent forklifts being in the same place as workers
- Re-schedule work activities so that forklifts are not in operation at the same time as workers checking stock
- Forklift driver checked over his shoulders
- Driver should have worn a beanie instead of a hoodie, to enable better vision
- Used proximity devices for forklifts and people
- Used pallet jacks instead of forks during busy times
- Not worn headphones on or near forklifts.



## TOOLBOX TALK TWO

### DON'T LOSE YOUR LOAD

Include these workers:

- Forklift drivers

#### Preparation for the talk:

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- Make sure you have internet access (i.e. phone or tablet) to show our forklift safety video
- Get a suitable lifting attachment (if you have one) and a forklift ready for the practical exercise
- Have a pen and notebook to jot down any safety suggestions from workers
- Print out the [SafeWork NSW Guide for Operators](#)

#### READ OUT

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##### Fact

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Loads are more likely to fall from a forklift if the driver does not make sure they are stable on the pallet e.g. shrink wrapped, short and squat or secured to provide stability, or if the driver tries to move a load that would be better suited to an attachment.

Before using an attachment, operators must check that the forklift capacity plate names the attachment and also look for the new capacity of the forklift, when the attachment is fitted.

**Note:** Fitting an attachment will usually de-rate the capacity of the forklift.

#### Case Study

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A forklift operator was asked to move a 44-gallon drum of engine oil from one side of the workshop to another. The operator asked his co-worker to give him a hand. The co-worker tilted the drum back just enough for the forklift operator to place the tynes (forks) underneath the drum.

The operator then lifted the drum up and drove in a forward direction while the co-worker placed his hands on the drum to steady it as he walked alongside the forklift.

The forklift then rolled on to a speed hump that the operator didn't see, because the load was raised too high and the drum started to slide off the tynes.

The co-worker yelled out to the operator to stop as he tried to stop the drum from sliding off. The falling drum was too heavy for the co-worker, so he let it go. The drum fell and landed on him, causing serious ankle and foot injuries.

#### Ask your workers: What could have been done differently?

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Possible answers:

- Used a suitable lifting attachment such as a drum lifter
- Not placed the drum directly on to the tines/forks
- Travelled with the drum as low to the ground as possible
- Not tried to steady the load by hand
- Not allowed anyone to be in close proximity of the drum or forklift
- Travelled in reverse - the drum may obscure the operators view of things such as speed humps or other obstacles
- Decanted the oil into smaller containers or into a specialised container that can be lifted on the tines, for example a stillage bin.

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## TOOLBOX TALK THREE

### BELT UP

*Note: This talk is intended for sit-down counter balance forklifts.*

Include these workers:

- Forklift drivers.

#### Preparation for the talk

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- Have a forklift with a stable and secured load ready for the practical exercise.
- When lifting and lowering the load, ensure workers are at a safe distance.
- Have a pen and notebook to jot down any safety suggestions from workers.
- Print out the [SafeWork NSW Safety Guide for Operators](#)

#### READ OUT

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##### Fact

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**Normal human instinct is to jump free from a forklift in the event of a tip-over; however, in many instances, operators have been crushed and killed by the overhead guard of a sit-down counter balance forklift. A seat belt is designed to prevent the operator from jumping or falling out in the event of a collision or tip-over.**

#### Case Study

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A forklift operator was asked to load a truck on the other side of the yard, approximately 200 metres away. The yard surface consisted of gravel and was uneven.

The forklift was loaded with a pallet stacked high with heavy boxes. The driver began to travel in a forward direction and much faster than walking pace.

Because his vision was obscured by the boxes, the operator raised the load high enough to be able to see under the pallet.

While travelling, the operator came to a slight bend and did not slow down. The left front wheel dropped in to a pot hole and the forklift began to tip sideways.

The operator panicked and, because he was not wearing a seatbelt, tried to jump clear of the overturning forklift. As he jumped, the overhead guard came down on him suddenly and trapped him under the forklift. The driver sustained fatal injuries.

#### Ask your workers: What could have been done differently?

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Possible answers:

- Worn a seat belt
- Lowered the load as low as possible (Raising the load made it very top heavy)
- Slowed down at the bend
- Repaired the yard surface
- Moved the truck closer to where the load is being moved
- Driven in reverse (The load was obscuring his view when travelling in a forward direction)
- Used a spotter at a safe distance to guide him
- Driven at walking pace
- Checked his route to look for any hazards or obstacles such as potholes and uneven surfaces
- Instead of jumping, should have stayed seated, held tight, braced feet, leaned away.

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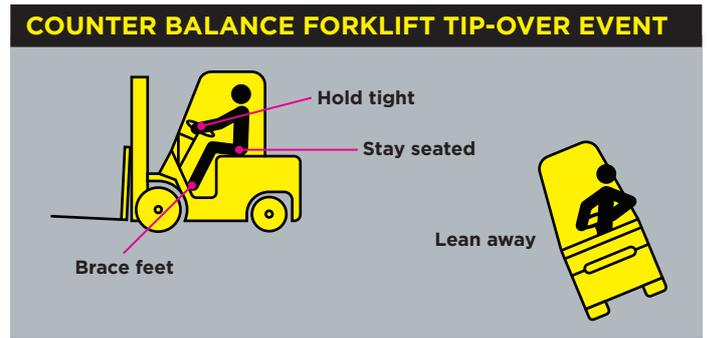
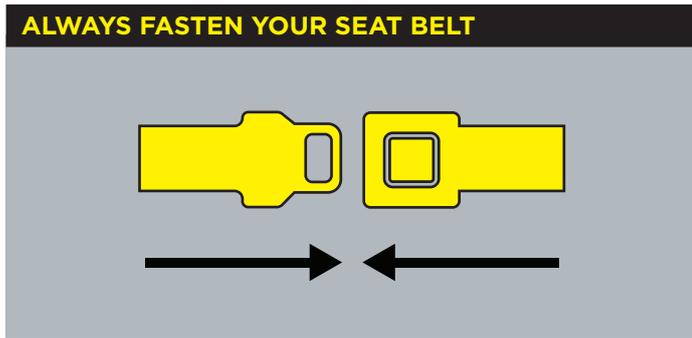
**LIKE IN A CAR,  
WEARING A SEAT BELT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE IN A TIP-OVER OR COLLISION.**

**Practical exercise**

Ensure the forklift is secured, the load is stable and that workers maintain a safe distance when lowering and lifting the load.

Raise a load in the air to explain how this will obscure the operators view and make the forklift unstable/top heavy, potentially resulting in a tip over if turning at speed or on sloping ground.

Lower the load and have operators compare the difference between the vision they have if travelling forward and if travelling in reverse.



**In summary**

- It's important to remember that working safely in and around forklifts is everyone's responsibility
- Is there anything that we could be doing better in our workplace in relation to avoiding a forklift tip-over and wearing a seat belt at all times? Take notes about any suggestions:

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**After the session**

- Re-visit your safe working practices and/or procedures to see if there are any improvements you can make.

