

Toolbox Safety Talks

Forklift safety

SafeWork SA
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Talk about safety at work SafeWork SA

Take ten minutes at 10am, or at any other time of the day, to talk with your team about workplace safety. This training resource is designed to help you deliver short presentations covering a series of work health and safety topics.

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Here is an example

During the construction of a shopping centre, a fitter was installing the fire protection system. He was carrying a large piece of plasterboard in the mall area of the site when a forklift truck reversed over him.

The forklift driver stopped, thinking he had reversed over a piece of fallen plasterboard obstructing his path. The driver dismounted in order to investigate, only to find the fitter underneath the plasterboard. The fitter was taken to hospital and underwent surgery. He suffered a broken tibia and fibula in his left leg, wounds to his left foot, a broken left ankle and a dislocated bone in his right leg. It is almost two years since the incident, and he has still not returned to work.

ASK THE QUESTION

What factors contributed to the incident?

Possible answers:

- *forklifts vs pedestrian lack of awareness*
- *inadequate training of staff*
- *no forklift driver's licence*
- *lack of signage (eg. don't walk behind forklifts, mobile plant)*

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Incidents like this one cause lost-time injuries. More than a third of these forklift related injuries are a result of muscular stress while handling loads. Other common injuries include getting caught in moving parts, falls from height, workers/pedestrians being trapped or caught between a moving forklift/moving parts of a forklift and stationary object, collisions between forklifts and other vehicles or stationary objects, and forklift operators and others being hit by falling objects.

Workplace health and safety is everyone's responsibility

The Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) has a duty of care to provide a safe workplace and systems of work, information, instruction, training, supervision and an opportunity for workers to consult about work health and safety.

In relation to forklifts this would include:

- **Identify hazards associated with our environment at work.** Ensure that there is minimal interaction between pedestrians and forklifts, and that visibility is clear for those working on and around forklifts. We need to think about the sort of work we do, and assess the risks associated with any identified hazards. For example, if people are working long shifts, there is more likelihood of an incident. Identify what tasks are expected to be completed at what stage in the shift.
- **Develop safe work procedures for forklifts.** Be mindful of issues and hazards that have been identified in the workplace. Prepare safe procedures or job instructions for particular tasks, and ensure that they are distributed and explained to all relevant workers. Make sure that safety procedures are regularly reviewed and audited to enable health and safety outcomes are achieved.
- **Provide instruction and training.** This should be based on the procedures developed for those people who operate, inspect, maintain, store or transport forklifts, or who work in the vicinity of forklifts. You must be trained in all attachments used on forklifts and make sure they are only used as specified by the manufacturer. Examples of attachments are fork extensions, jibs and drum lifters.

As workers, we have a responsibility to protect our own health and safety and that of others affected by our work. We should follow instructions, and only use forklift trucks for the purpose for which they are designed.

We should all be provided with appropriate information and training to allow us to fulfil that obligation. For example, forklifts must travel up ramps forwards, therefore the load must face uphill. When travelling, the load and fork arms should be at approximately axle height. People should never be lifted or transported on bare fork arms or a load. If the forklift is going to be used to lift people, it must be fitted with a secured safety cage. If a worker was injured because he/she was not wearing a seat belt, the company could be prosecuted.

To get a new qualification in forklift operation you must undertake appropriate training and be assessed as competent by an assessor who is accredited with SafeWork SA.

The *National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work* requires operators of forklifts to hold a national licence, issued by SafeWork SA. You must be 18 years or over to have a licence.

There are two types of forklift for which you must hold a *Licence to Perform High Risk Work*.

1. **Forklift truck** – this covers the operation of a powered industrial truck equipped with a mast and an elevating load carriage to which is attached a pair of fork arms or other attachment. This type of forklift is generally referred to as a counter-balance forklift.
2. **Order picking forklift truck** – this covers the operation of a powered industrial truck of a type where the operator's control arrangement is incorporated with the load carriage/lifting media, and elevates with it.

Pre-High Risk Work Licences

Older style tickets and Certificates of Competency (pre-High Risk Work) have now expired and are no longer valid. In order to undertake High Risk Work you will need to be trained and assessed.

ASK THE QUESTION

Before I finish, is there anything that we could be doing in this workplace to encourage a healthy lifestyle?

Take notes about suggestions ... don't panic if there aren't any takers!

READ OUT

OK, unless anyone has any questions, thanks for participating.