

## Powered Industrial Trucks (PIT's) – Useful but Potentially Dangerous (May 2023)

In the SE TX area, there were five fatalities and 37 serious injuries reported to the OSHA offices last Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. PIT Forklift operators and employees working around these operations are at risk of hazards such as collisions, falls, tip-overs, and struck-by conditions. It's important for operators to be trained and to follow PIT safe operating procedures. Workers in the area need to be able to recognize, and avoid, potential hazards from moving equipment.



### Ways to prevent forklift hazards include:

#### Forklift Operations

- Always operate the vehicle according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always wear a seatbelt when the forklift has one.
- Never exceed the rated load and ensure it is stable and balanced.
- Do not raise or lower the load while traveling.
- Keep a safe distance from platform and ramp edges.
- Be aware of other vehicles in the work area.
- Have clear visibility of the work area and ensure you have enough clearance when raising, loading, and operating a forklift.
- Use proper footing and the handhold, if available, when entering the lift.
- Use horns at cross aisles and obstructed areas.
- Watch for pedestrians and observe the speed limit.
- Do not give rides or use the forks to lift people.

#### Safety Training

- **Only trained and certified workers may operate a forklift.**
- **Ensure operators are trained on types of trucks in use.**

#### Forklift Maintenance

- Remove from service any forklift found to be in unsafe operating condition.
- Keep forklifts in clean condition; free of excess oil and grease.
- Repair and maintain according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

### Examples of FY 22 SE Texas Incidents:

- Employee was operating a motorized tugger and was traveling through a roll-up door to go outside. As he was traveling through the door, he put his head outside of the machine and was struck by the partially open roll-up door. Dead on scene.
- Employee and a coworker were looking at documents to determine which containers needed to be moved while a forklift operator was staging empty containers to fill with product. The operator thought the two employees were on a different side of the yard. He went to back up and struck the two employees. One employee was crushed and the other sustained fractures and lacerations.
- Employee was spotting for a forklift carrying a load of drywall. The drywall shifted and slid off the forks of the forklift and struck the spotter fracturing his left femur.

- Employee walking east to west inside a warehouse along the side of the dock. A forklift operator had two bundles of plywood on the forks was traveling south to north. The employee yelled as the forklift approached him and the operator hit the brakes. When the brakes were applied, the load of plywood slid off the forks and struck them in the head and upper body area. Dead on scene.
- Employee drove a forklift over an area that had a non-metal grate rated for about 350 lbs. The forklift fell into the water capture pit, tipping to the side, and pinched his leg between the grate and the forklift fracturing three bones in their left foot.
- Employee finished loading up bales of banded cardboard into the back of a 53' trailer, tapped his horn, and began to back out of the trailer. The truck driver heard the forklift horn, and thinking the operator was finished, pulled away from the loading dock. The forklift he was operating fell out of the back of a moving trailer and they suffered a fractured L2.
- Employee fell while dismounting a forklift and suffered hip injury resulting in hospitalization.
- An employee was operating a reach truck and about to extract a pallet from an overhead rack. Before extracting the pallet, the forks on the forklift fell/collapsed back onto the employee. It was determined that the lift was missing pins. The lift was a rental that the company had just received.
- Employee was riding on the back of a forklift when the operator went to back up and they jumped off the back of the forklift. His pant leg got caught on the hook that was on the back of the forklift and their right foot was run over by the forklift
- Employee was emptying trash in the facility and while walking to pick up a trash can, they stepped out of a designated pedestrian walking path and was struck by a forklift causing him to be pinned between the forklift and a support pole. Fractured pelvis and suspected internal organ damage.
- Employee was operating a stand-up forklift. They oversteered while turning into an aisle and attempted to prevent the stand-up forklift from contacting a storage rack by placing out her left arm, which struck the storage rack, fracturing it.

**When we look at PIT incidents over recent years a few things tend to stand out:**

- Unsecured loads falling off the forks
  - PIT operators not keeping their arms or legs inside the cab area
  - PIT operators after losing control, attempt to stop the PIT with their arm or leg
- PIT operators run into other employees in the area. Operators need to keep a watchful eye out
- Employees in the area don't pay attention to PITs operating in the area. PITs can have blinds spot and obscured vision. Operators and workers in the area both need to remain vigilant

**These certainly don't cover all the hazards, or the needed hazard controls, but they occur often. Some things do seem to have decreased such as falls from working off the forks/racks, incidents related to forklift mast maintenance, tip-overs, and pipe handling incidents.**

\*Narratives are based in the first report of injury and are rewritten for brevity and may not reflect the final results of an investigation. Data may be used 'as is'. For additional information and incidents refer to the '2023 SE Texas Powered Industrial Trucks (P.I.T.) Overview\* (v1 May 2023)'. For questions email Jim Shelton at the HNAO at: [shelton.james@dol.gov](mailto:shelton.james@dol.gov)

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