

Simply Safety:

Forklift Trucks – The Mobile Killer

Forklift trucks are indispensable to industry, but if used incorrectly they can be mobile killers.

Industry can't manage without forklift trucks, but if they are not used properly and safely they can injure employees, damage buildings and result in loss of or damage to stock.

Employers have a duty to identify and manage the risks associated with the use of forklift trucks in order to reduce workplace accidents, which will in turn minimise other losses to the business.

The safe use of forklift trucks generally requires common sense and need not be a complex issue.

Key facts about managing the use of forklift trucks:

- **Safe people:**

The key consideration is the capability of the driver. A driver can potentially turn a useful forklift truck into a killing machine. Employers must carefully vet and select suitable employees to become forklift truck drivers and give them suitable training. Managers and supervisors must ensure that drivers follow their training and obey the rules, for example, adhering to speed limits and using trucks responsibly.

- **Safe plant:**

It is imperative to have the correct vehicle for the job. There are many types of forklift trucks, so advice should be sought to make sure the vehicle purchased or hired is suitable. From then on, the truck should be maintained properly via inspections, daily checks by the driver and detailed examinations required by law.

If trucks need to be fitted with accessories, for example special handling devices, then it is essential to seek the manufacturer's advice. Attachments should be designed to match the truck, which must be able to accept any add-on equipment.

- **Safe place:**

Safety measures seen on the public highway may need to be considered for premises. Road surfaces and traffic routes must be in good order, and give way points must be appropriately marked. Signs may need to be erected and speed limits introduced and enforced. If complex junctions exist it may be necessary to erect traffic lights. For night work, lighting is essential.

Segregating pedestrians and trucks can reduce the risk of people being run over, but pavements and permanent barriers may also be needed.

At low speeds serious accidents occur – with a speeding forklift truck the consequences may be even worse, so speed needs to be controlled.

Simply Safety Sheets are intended to provide a short and simple introduction to the key issues facing business. For more information go to www.norwichunion.com/RiskManager and for consultancy, training courses and more information go to Norwich Union's risk management subsidiary Norwich Union Risk Services www.nurs.co.uk

Simply Safety information sheets are designed to give general information on risk management topics. Readers should take specific advice when dealing with particular situations.

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