



Never Elevate a Fellow Worker on the Forks of a Forklift

Like most accidents, this one happened on a day that began quite normally, yet ended in tragedy. Bill, a 14-year veteran, and Jonathon, a 9-year veteran of a typical retail fertilizer facility, were busy trying to get the first loads of fertilizer out for the day, when the conveyer belt began slipping. After a quick inspection, it was determined that the conveyor would need a new set of belts on the drive motor located on the top end of the conveyer. After the Facility Manager brought the men a new set of belts, Jonathon got on the forklift and proceeded to get the safety cage, which was located less than 5 feet away from the two men, behind the blender and a stack of wood pallets. As he began to move one of the wood pallets, Bill told him the job wouldn't take long and instructed Jonathon to "just bring him a pallet." Following Bill's directions, Jonathan lifted Bill approximately 12 feet to the top of the conveyor belt. Jonathan turned off the engine, set the brake, and got off the forklift in order to help Bill with the repair. Bill didn't wait for Jonathan and in his attempt to roll the belts onto the pulley by himself, he lost his balance and fell 12 feet to the concrete surface below, striking his head. An ambulance was called and immediately took Bill to a local hospital where he was airlifted to the state trauma center. He was listed in critical condition with a fractured skull, back, and neck.

Every year there are approximately 85 deaths and 35,000 lost time injuries related to the operation of a forklift, end loader or other powered industrial truck. Many of these deaths and injuries can be prevented by ensuring all employees are properly trained and adhere to the rules governing the use of forklifts. OSHA's Powered Industrial Truck Standard is found at 29 CFR 1910.178.

In this case, both men had been trained on proper forklift operations. A safety cage, safety harness, and lanyard were readily available and provided by the company for the employees when working on elevated surfaces. This tragic accident could have been avoided had proper procedures been followed by the two veteran employees.

One of the basic safety rules for operating a forklift or front-end loader is never allow persons to be raised while standing on the forks or in a bucket. This is a serious safety violation and is **never** permitted. If workers must be elevated by use of a piece of lift equipment, the safe method is to use an approved safety platform securely mounted on the forks. An approved safety platform will include 42" handrails, rails at midpoint, flooring, and a protective device to keep worker's hands and feet from getting caught in the mast while it is being raised and lowered. Operators of lift equipment must never leave the operators station while anyone is elevated on the safety platform.

For more information, [click here](#).

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The names of the employees and company have been changed to protect their identity. This information is believed to be reliable by NAEHSS and the Asmark Institute, however, because of constantly changing government regulations, interpretations and applicability or the possibility of human, mechanical or computer error, the publisher does not guarantee the information. Users must satisfy themselves the information is suitable for any specific purpose.

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