

Truck Driver Crushed by Freight Pushed Off Flatbed Trailer

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-249-2024s

REPORT DATE: January 8, 2024

INCIDENT DATE: March 23, 2023

WORKER: 63 years old

INDUSTRY: Specialized freight trucking

OCCUPATION: Semi-truck driver

SCENE: Building Construction Site

EVENT TYPE: Crushed by falling object



A 63-year-old semi-truck driver died after being crushed by a crate pushed off a flatbed trailer. He worked for his employer, a sheet metal roofing manufacturer, for 23 years. His duties included delivering roofing materials to construction sites.

The driver was at a residential construction site where he was delivering roofing materials with a flatbed trailer. The materials consisted of metal sheets bundled in three 56-foot long wood crates and a few smaller crates. The three long, heavier crates were on the driver's side of the trailer.

Normally, the driver used his own forklift to unload freight, but the longer load left no room on the trailer to bring it. Instead, he asked construction workers at the site if they could use their company's telehandler forklift to unload the trailer for him. A lead carpenter operated the forklift assisted by spotters at each end of the trailer. They unloaded the smaller crates first from the passenger side of the trailer.

The driver then directed the forklift operator to lift two of the longer crates at one time from the same side so he could pull the truck forward from under them. He left the workers and went to the driver's side of the trailer to put cargo straps into the underbody toolbox.

As the operator began to lift the crates, the third crate was inadvertently pushed off the driver's side of the trailer. When the construction workers heard the crash, they went around the trailer and found the driver crushed under the fallen crate, which weighed around 2,500 pounds. They used a skid steer to lift the crate off him, started CPR, and called 911. Medics arrived shortly after, but he had already died at the scene.

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The crate base lacked enough clearance for the telehandler's forks to slide under it unobstructed.
- The telehandler operator and spotters had obstructed views of the load and workers on the ground. They also thought the driver was in his truck cab when they were unloading the trailer.
- The driver was not wearing a hi-visibility vest or hardhat.



Photo 1. Location (x) where truck driver was crushed by crate that was pushed off the trailer by a forklift on the other side.



Photo 2. View of incident area from back of truck cab.



Photo 3. Damage to trailer's underbody toolbox caused by crate that crushed driver.



Photo 4. Telehandler forklift on passenger side of flatbed trailer. The truck driver was in the blind zone on the opposite side of the trailer when the crate was pushed off.

FATALITY NARRATIVE

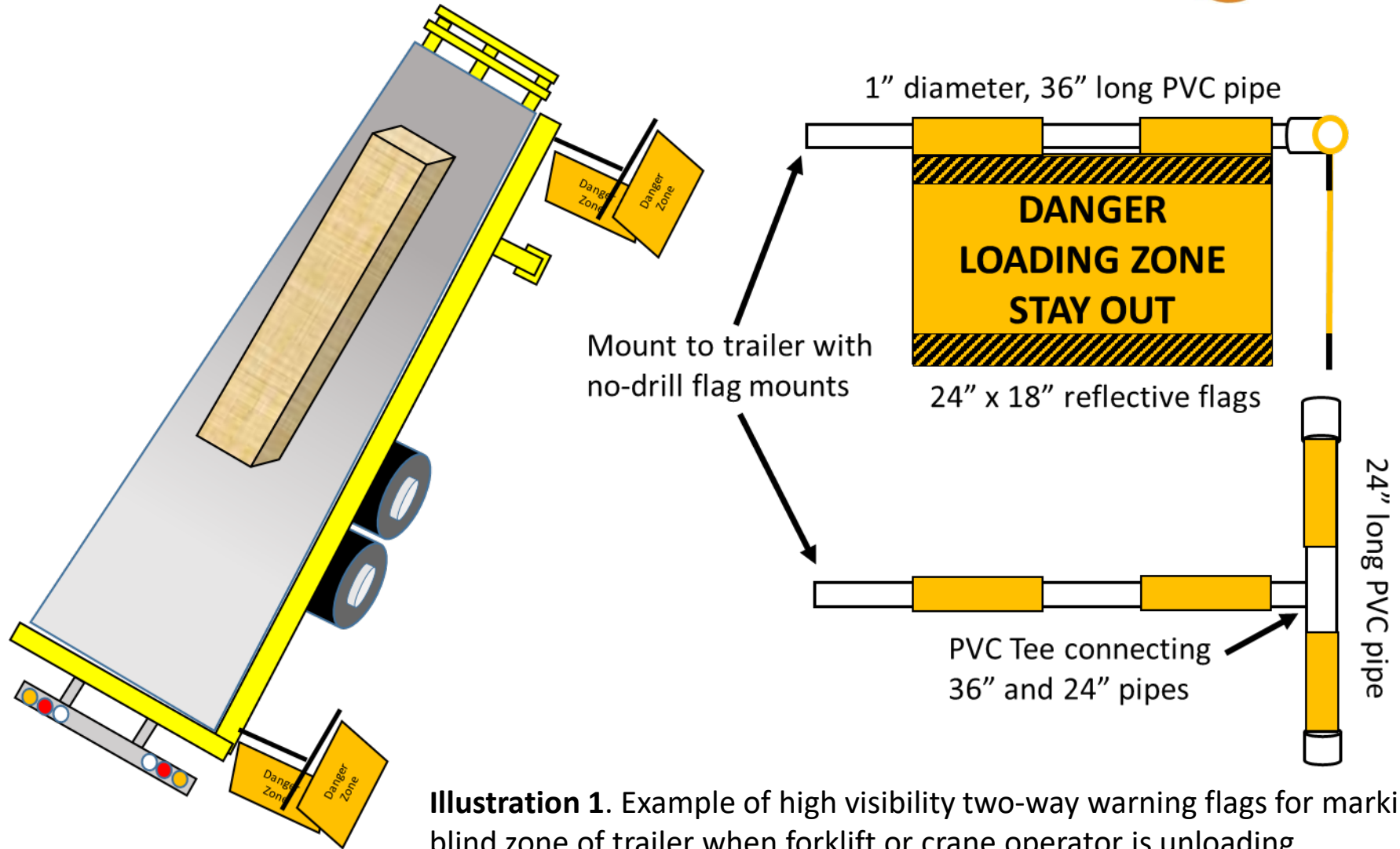


Illustration 1. Example of high visibility two-way warning flags for marking blind zone of trailer when forklift or crane operator is unloading.

Requirements

Employers must:

- You must provide your employees a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, serious injury or death. See [WAC 296-800-11005](#)

Recommendations

FACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Provide initial and refresher cargo securement training for flatbed drivers that emphasizes pre-task planning; maintaining situational awareness and clear visibility of workers, vehicles, equipment, and loads; wearing high-visibility clothing and PPE; and identifying blind zones around trailers.
- Prohibit forklift operators from unloading freight on flatbed trailers unless they are trained and certified.

Recommendations

- Create and enforce a standard operating procedure (SOP) policy for unloading freight in their accident prevention program (APP) that requires truck drivers to:
 - Perform a site hazard analysis of the unloading area and develop a method for preventing workers from being harmed by falling or shifting freight and movement of material handling equipment.

Recommendations

- Place high visibility warning signs at each end of the blind zone on the opposite side of the flatbed trailer from where the forklift or crane operator is unloading. Mark the blind zone even when a spotter is present, and make sure no one enters it. Verify signage and other safeguards before starting work.
- Wait in cab or designated safe zone when other workers operate forklifts or cranes.

Resources

[Flatbed Trucking Safety Training Video Series](#)

Alabama Trucking Association Compensation Fund

This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident in Washington State and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or conclusions regarding the cause of the fatality.

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