

Operator Crushed Between Forklift and Storage Rack

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-225-2022s

REPORT DATE: August 8, 2022

INCIDENT DATE: September 16, 2021

WORKER: 54 years old

INDUSTRY: Structural Steel and Precast
Concrete Contractors

OCCUPATION: Forklift Operator / Installer

SCENE: Customer Warehouse

EVENT TYPE: Struck by / Crushed



A 54-year-old forklift operator died after being crushed between a forklift and a storage rack. The operator and a coworker were installing large metal storage racks in a customer's warehouse. They were in the process of placing shims under the uprights to level the racks.

The operator was using a forklift to raise the racks so they could install the shims while his coworker drilled holes in the concrete floor to anchor the uprights. The operator parked the forklift, shut off the engine, and set the parking brake. He then exited the forklift but left the forks raised to about 39 inches. He unknowingly parked on top of the cord of the drill his coworker was using.

His coworker got in the forklift to move it and try to free the cord. He started the engine and put it in forward gear but did not know how to release the parking brake. He asked for assistance, so the operator reached into the cab and released the parking brake.

Once the brake released, the forklift started moving toward the metal racks. The coworker swerved to avoid the racks and the operator was crushed between the rear of the forklift and one of the metal uprights. The coworker then panicked and jumped from the forklift, which finally came to a stop when its forks ran into a wall. The operator was pronounced dead shortly after arriving at the hospital.

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The employer had an Accident Prevention Program (APP) and had performed a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) prior to this task but this situation was not an expected hazard.
- Neither the operator nor the coworker had completed a required operator training program before operating the forklift or other powered industrial trucks (PITs).
- The operator had received on the job training and was authorized by the employer to operate the forklift. The coworker was not trained or authorized to operate the forklift.



Photo 1. Rear side of forklift that struck and crushed the operator against one of the metal uprights.

FATALITY NARRATIVE

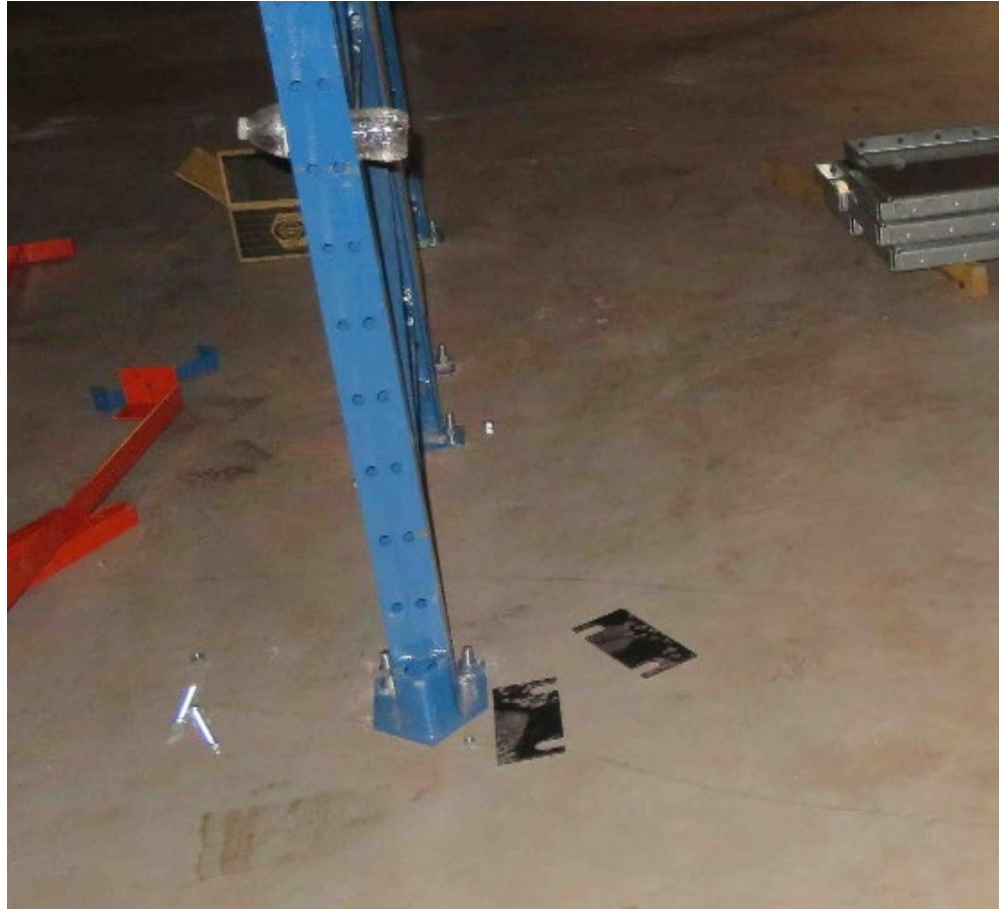


Photo 2. Levelling shims on the floor near metal upright where workers were installing racks.

FATALITY NARRATIVE

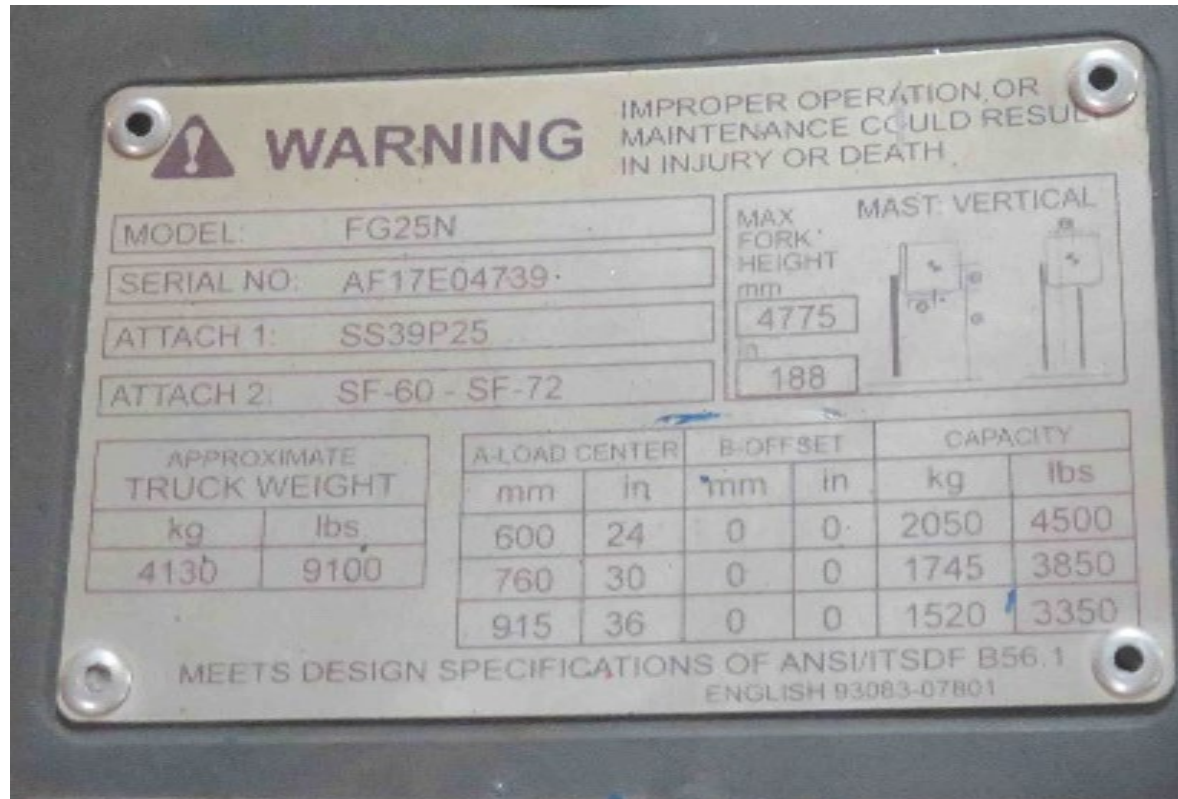


Photo 3. Manufacturer's serial number plate on forklift with warning that improper operation could result in injury or death.

Requirements

- Employers must make sure employees successfully complete an operator training program before operating PITs. [WAC 296-863-60005](#)

Recommendations

- Train workers to:
 - Identify unexpected situations, not specifically addressed in the JHA.
 - Evaluate the hazards associated with unexpected situations.
 - Control the hazards safely if possible and check with a supervisor if they cannot or have questions.
- Instruct unauthorized workers never to operate PITs, even if only for a short time. Likewise, instruct authorized operators to prevent unauthorized workers from operating PITs.

Resources

[Complete Forklifts training kit](#). Completion of this course fulfills the training requirements of Forklifts, [WAC 296-863](#).

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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