

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:

71-229-2022

REPORT DATE:

November 4, 2022

INCIDENT DATE:

April 30, 2021

WORKER:

52 years old

INDUSTRY:

General freight trucking

OCCUPATION:

Forklift operator

SCENE:

Freight staging area

EVENT TYPE:

Crush - Caught in or between



Yellow warning label on incident forklift's instrument panel. The label provides a warning that improper forklift operation or maintenance could result in injury or death.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the injury. Developed by WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. The FACE Program is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH grant# 5U60OH008487). For more information visit www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face.

Forklift Operator's Arm Crushed by Mast

SUMMARY

A 52-year-old forklift operator severely broke his arm after he reached through a forklift mast and caused the mast to drop on it. He had worked for the employer for four years.

When the incident occurred, the operator was using the forklift at a trucking terminal dock to unload and load palletized freight from inbound to outbound delivery trucks. While his forklift was supporting a raised pallet, the operator leaned forward to scan the barcode on the load. When his handheld barcode reader failed to scan the load, the operator leaned further and reached his arm between the forklift mast's crossmembers to get the reader closer to the code.

As he leaned, he bumped the mast control lever, causing the mast to drop and crush his arm. The mast's downward motion lifted his body off the driver's seat, which engaged the forklift's automatic shutoff switch and kept his arm caught in the mast. A nearby co-worker climbed on the forklift and sat on the seat to restart it so the operator could be removed. Paramedics treated the operator and transported him to the hospital. The near-death incident severely fractured the operator's arm, which required surgery.



Arrow shows lowered mast on incident forklift. The operator leaned forward in the cab, reached his arm through the mast's crossmembers, and inadvertently engaged the control lever that dropped the mast on his arm, crushing it.

Investigators found that the forklift operator did not follow the employer's Accident Prevention Program (APP) rules and training to never extend any part of their body between the mast of the forklift.

REQUIREMENTS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Install windshield on forklift to prevent operator from reaching arm between mast crossmembers.
- Train forklift operators to:
 - Never place any part of the body between masts.
 - Lower mast to the ground when parking forklift.
 - Understand the hazards of forklift masts.
 - Follow the requirements of the manufacturer's operator's manual.
 - Obey safety requirements on equipment warning labels.
 - Inspect masts and report mechanical deficiencies.
 - Never operate malfunctioning forklifts until repaired.
 - Report hazardous operating conditions and co-worker behavior.

RESOURCES

- [Complete Forklifts training kit.](#) Completion of this course fulfills the training requirements of Forklifts, WAC 296-863.
- [Safe Operation of Forklifts.](#) Online forklift safety training course to improve knowledge of safe operation.
- [Powered Industrial Trucks - Forklifts.](#) Safety training resources from OSHA.