

Forklift Operator's Arm Crushed by Mast

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #: 71-229-2022s

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



INJURY NARRATIVE



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.

INJURY NARRATIVE



When the incident occurred, the operator was using the forklift to load and unload palletized freight at a trucking terminal dock. 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.

INJURY NARRATIVE



As he leaned, he bumped the mast control lever, which dropped the mast on 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. The operator was treated and hospitalized when paramedics arrived. The near-death incident severely fractured the operator's arm, which required surgery.

Investigators found:

- The forklift operator had disregarded the employer's Accident Prevention Program (APP) rules and training to never extend any part of their body between the mast of the forklift.

INJURY NARRATIVE



Photo 1. 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.

INJURY NARRATIVE

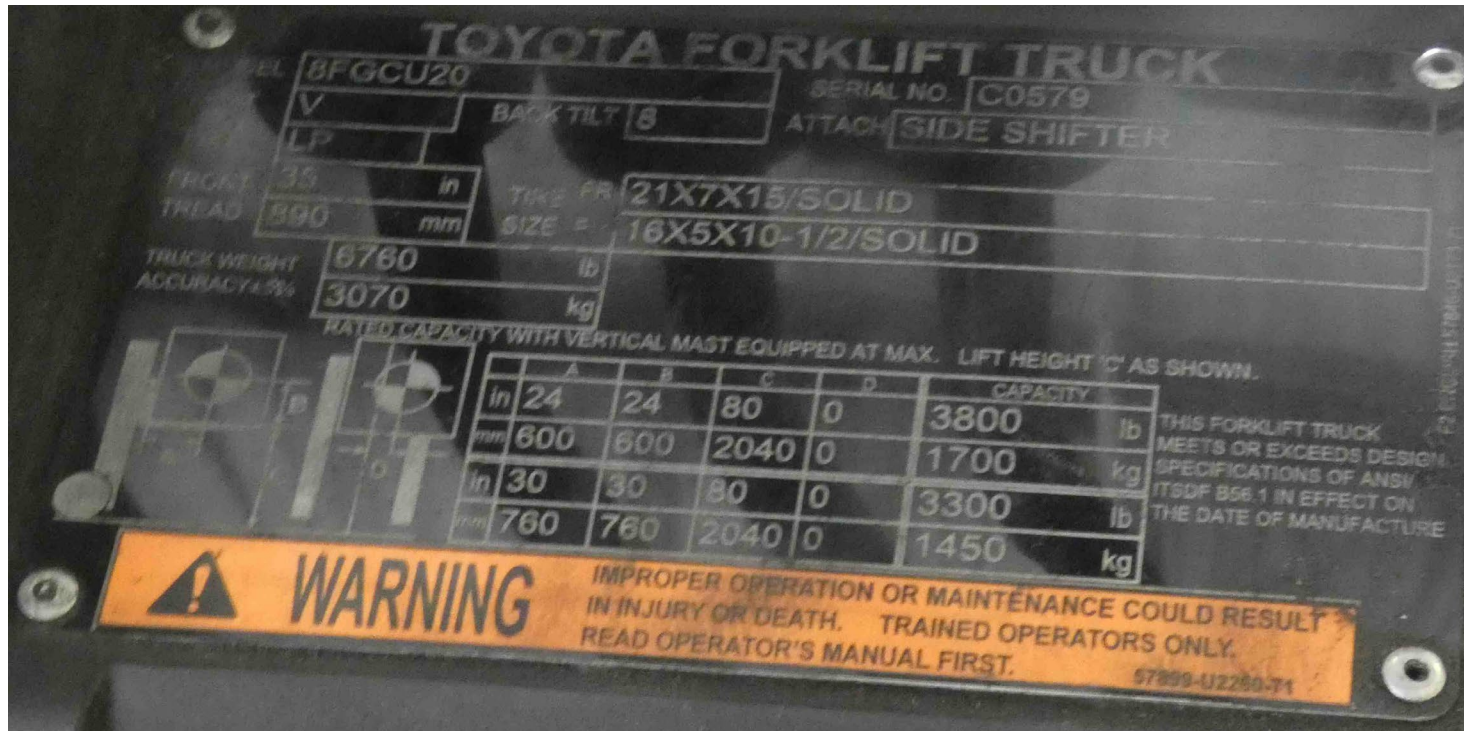


Photo 2. Yellow warning label on incident forklift’s instrument panel. The label provides a warning that improper forklift operation or maintenance could result in injury or death.

Requirements

Employers must:

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

Recommendations

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

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.

INJURY NARRATIVE



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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