

FORKLIFT PEDESTRIAN SAFETY: **FOR OPERATORS**

COURSE OUTLINE

- **If pedestrians and forklift operators don't work together to share their space safely, it could lead to big problems.**
 - *Someone in the United States is killed in a forklift-related accident every three days.*
 - *Nearly 80 percent of those accidents involve a pedestrian.*
 - *According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), almost 70 percent of these accidents could have been avoided if proper safety precautions had been taken.*
- **The human body is no match for a 9,000-pound forklift, even in a low-speed collision.**
 - If an accident does occur, pedestrians could suffer severe, even fatal, injuries.
- **In order to prevent these incidents, both operators and pedestrians need to know why forklift accidents happen... and how they can be prevented.**
- **Sometimes pedestrians don't see you coming until it's too late.**
 - People can have a lot of trouble seeing an approaching forklift, especially when there are other pedestrians or large pieces of equipment in their line of sight.
- **If someone doesn't see you approaching, they won't be able to get out of the way.**
 - Since forklifts don't brake as quickly as cars do, it could also be impossible for you to react quickly enough to avoid a collision.
- **It can also be difficult to hear a forklift coming, so you should always try to warn people who are in your path.**
 - Sound your horn to let them know that you're approaching... or even communicate verbally when possible.
 - At times your facility might be so noisy that pedestrians can't hear the horn, or your instructions... and that can create a dangerous situation for everyone.

- **The most common reason that pedestrians don't know there's a forklift in the vicinity is because they aren't paying attention.**
- **A forklift's brakes are not as responsive as a car's, and its center of gravity is always shifting when it's moving, which can make it very unstable.**
 - If you try to swerve or brake quickly to avoid a distracted pedestrian, it could cause the forklift to tip over... and crush anything in its path.
- **Operating a forklift in a busy area can be difficult, and there are several factors beyond your control that can make it even harder.**
- **Just like pedestrians, forklift operators can have problems with reduced visibility.**
 - The forks, mast and cage can all make it hard to see what's going on in front of you.
 - Carrying a tall or bulky load makes it even worse.
- **If they're in a noisy environment, forklift drivers can also have trouble hearing people who are trying to communicate with them.**
 - If it looks like someone is trying to talk to you, do whatever is necessary to be sure that you can hear, and understand, them.
- **The way that a forklift maneuvers can also present a challenge when you're in a busy area.**
 - Since a forklift's center of gravity shifts when it's in motion, making a turn safely can be difficult for you.
 - Just like braking or swerving quickly, turning too sharply or driving too fast could cause the forklift to tip over and injure people who are in the area.
- **The most common way that pedestrians can be injured by a moving forklift is when the back of the lift swings out as it turns.**
 - Unlike cars, forklifts steer from the rear axle, and their front wheels pivot when you're turning.
 - This means that the rear end of the forklift swings in a circle around the front wheels, which are supporting most of the load.
 - The sharper you turn, the wider the back end swings out... and the greater the risk that you can hit a pedestrian if they get too close.
- **Your facility must also take precautions to make it easier for everyone to share their space safely.**

- **Separating forklifts from pedestrians is the quickest, easiest and most obvious way to avoid collisions.**
 - Forklift accidents involving pedestrians won't occur if forklifts and people are separated.
 - Painted lines, hazard cones or barriers can be used to create walkways in zones where forklifts operate and let pedestrians know what areas to avoid.
- **Your facility can mark off "pedestrian walkways" that will let you know where to stay away from and highlight places where people might be crossing your lane.**
 - These pathways should be designed to keep pedestrians away from high forklift traffic areas, elevated loads and other potentially dangerous work zones.
- **In some places there's just not enough room for pedestrians to have their own separate walkways.**
 - If people must walk through an area where forklifts are actively operating, your facility should provide enough space for them to stay to one side.
- **Installing convex mirrors at intersections can help you to spot people when they're crossing aisles or turning corners.**
 - These mirrors can be a great way to ensure that you can see what's going on in these "blind spots".
 - A mirror can also help pedestrians to see what may be coming at them.
- **Just like on the highway, speeding on a forklift can have tragic results.**
 - If you're moving quickly, it can be harder for you to detect a "blind spot", and the chances of having an accident will increase.
 - Also, the faster your forklift approaches, the less time there is for a pedestrian to get out of the way.
 - A fast-moving forklift can cause much more damage than when it's traveling at a lower speed.
- **To reduce the risk of damage and injury, speed limit and traffic control signs should be posted in areas where forklifts are being used.**
 - You must obey these at all times.
- **To help prevent a collision involving a pedestrian when you're backing up...**
 - First, look behind you, either using mirrors or by simply turning your head.
 - This can help you see if there are any pedestrians in your way before you start moving.

- **One way facilities can make it easier to see where you're going when you're moving backward is by outfitting their forklifts with cameras and monitors.**
 - If the forklifts that you use have this equipment, make sure you know how it works... and use it.
- **However, being able to see in back of you might not always be enough.**
 - Sometimes a pedestrian can round a corner suddenly, and you may not be able to react quickly enough to avoid an accident.
 - You can mitigate this risk by using backup lights and alarms when you're in reverse.
- **Your facility should provide you, and everyone else who is responsible for forklift pedestrian safety, with the proper training.**
 - This training can help to educate everyone about safe work practices that they can use when forklifts and pedestrians are sharing a workspace.
- **Three groups of people need to participate in this safety training:**
 - Managers who are responsible for overall facility safety.
 - Any forklift operators who might encounter pedestrians.
 - The pedestrians themselves.
- **Before you can do any driving, you'll need to take the time to plan out your route.**
 - This can help you identify potential safety issues along your route... including pedestrian "trouble zones".
- **This begins with walking the route to look for things that might get in your way.**
 - Check to make sure that there is no clutter and that the lighting is bright enough for you to see any obstacles that might be in your path, including pedestrians.
- **If you spot people who could be in your path when you're driving, speak up!**
 - Let them know that a forklift will soon be operating in the area.
 - Ask them to keep a lookout so that they can get out of the way when you arrive.
- **Sometimes you may find places along your route where your vision could be obstructed while you're driving.**
 - These "blind spots" can make it difficult to spot pedestrians and other hazards.

- **In situations like this, you'll need to arrange for a "spotter" to help you navigate safely.**
 - "Spotters" are people who are certified by OSHA to act as an extra pair of eyes for a forklift operator while their forklift is in motion.
 - They work very closely with operators to make sure that everyone will be safe, and to prevent damage to the materials that are being moved.
- **However, there may not be a spotter available every time you're driving.**
 - Without that extra pair of eyes, it can be harder to "see" pedestrians along your route.
- **If it's difficult for you to see pedestrians, it might be difficult for them to see you as well.**
 - Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as high visibility vests and brightly-colored safety footwear, can help you be more visible.
- **Before you start your trip, be sure to check the speed limits in the areas you'll be traversing.**
 - Take note of any other traffic signs that may be on your route as well.
- **Before you set off, make sure that you leave your cell phone, along with anything else that could draw your attention away from your driving, in your pocket or locker.**
 - If you aren't focused on your driving, you won't be able to avoid a pedestrian if they step into your path.
- **Once you've made all of your preparations, you're ready to climb into the driver's seat... but there are three more things that you must do before you begin your trip:**
 - Buckle your seatbelt.
 - Make sure that you are alert and focused on what is going on around you.
 - Take a deep breath and relax.
- **To reduce the risk of an accident, take a moment to prepare yourself mentally before you start driving.**
 - Your state of mind can significantly affect your driving.
 - Emotion and fatigue can increase the chance that you won't notice a pedestrian coming until it's too late.

- **When your forklift is in motion, driving safely should be your number one priority.**
 - Following some basic “traffic rules” can make it much easier to avoid accidents.
- **First and foremost, pedestrians always have the right of way.**
 - No matter where you're going, or when you have to be there, you must take the time to stop for any pedestrian that wants to cross your lane, even if there is no crosswalk.
 - When you see someone waiting, stop, then use eye contact or hand signals to let them know that it's safe to proceed.
- **To make sure that pedestrians know that there is a forklift in the area, you should always use your horn and any other safety signals that are available, such as flashing lights, when you are approaching...**
 - Intersections.
 - Corners.
 - Doorways.
 - Aisles.
- **Even with advance warning, pedestrians might begin to cross before you're out of the area... and you can't avoid them if you don't have a clear view.**
 - So you don't want to move forward until you're positive that the coast is clear.
- **If you see a pedestrian nearby, you should make eye contact with them as you're approaching, and make sure that they acknowledge you in some way before you drive by.**
 - This will let you know that they are aware of your presence.
- **If a pedestrian wanders into your path, it's unlikely that you will be able to stop in time to prevent a collision.**
 - A forklift traveling at only 4 miles per hour needs more than 17 feet to come to a complete stop after the brakes are applied.
- **One of the best ways to protect pedestrians when you are driving is to stay focused and alert while you're at the wheel.**
 - To reduce the risk of incidents, it's crucial that you be aware of your surroundings at all times.

- **When you encounter a forklift on foot, you need to remember that you are always responsible for your own safety.**
- **One of the easiest ways to avoid an accident with a forklift is to be sure to stay a safe distance away when it is in motion.**
 - If you get too close to a lift while it's moving, the driver might not be able to react quickly enough to avoid you without putting others at risk.
- **Each facility must designate an "exclusion zone" around a moving forklift.**
 - This area is unsafe for pedestrians to enter.
- **As a general rule, the exclusion zone is at least four feet around an operating forklift.**
 - There may be times when the amount of space increases, such as when the forklift is carrying a heavy load or when the speed limit is higher than normal.
- **To make it easier for pedestrians to know how close they can get to a forklift, some facilities employ "zone warning lights".**
 - These lights are mounted on the forklift, and shine on the floor to show pedestrians where it's unsafe to stand when the lift is operating.
- **If you must enter the exclusion zone to talk to a driver, you should...**
 - Stand back from the forklift until the driver sees you.
 - Wait for the driver to bring the forklift to a complete stop.
- **You can then approach the forklift, but only after the driver has motioned you over.**
 - In some facilities, pedestrians are not allowed to approach a forklift unless the driver turns off the ignition, or dismounts from the forklift.
- **When you can't get close enough to a forklift to tell the operator that you're in the area without putting yourself in danger, the best way to make them aware of your presence is to...**
 - Stop.
 - Look both ways.
 - Make eye contact.

- **Always wait for the operator to acknowledge you and come to a complete stop before stepping in front of a forklift.**
 - If a driver doesn't indicate that they have seen you, even if you think that you have made eye contact, do not assume that they are going to stop.

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- **Both forklift operators and pedestrians need to know why forklift accidents happen, and how to prevent them.**
- **When you're driving a forklift, you are always responsible for pedestrians' safety... but your facility should also take steps to help prevent pedestrian-related forklift accidents.**
- **Before you start driving, you should plan out your route, and identify any potential pedestrian issues that you might encounter.**
- **Following some basic "traffic rules" when you're driving a forklift can help you to avoid all types of accidents, including those involving pedestrians.**
- **Forklift operators are not the only ones responsible for preventing collisions... pedestrians must also do their part to keep themselves out of harm's way.**
- **Whether you're sitting in the driver's seat or traveling on foot, it's your job to help prevent forklift accidents ... so that everyone in your facility can go home safe at the end of the day!**