

FORKLIFT SAFETY: FOR PEDESTRIANS

COURSE OUTLINE

- **Forklifts and people often occupy the same busy workspaces.**
 - If they don't work together to keep each other safe, there's a chance that they could cross paths in the most disastrous way possible.
- **Most forklift accidents involving pedestrians can be avoided when everyone in your facility is following safe work practices.**
 - In order to avoid these incidents, both pedestrians and operators need to know why forklift accidents happen... and how they can be prevented.
- **Sometimes, you might not see a forklift coming until it's too late.**
 - You might have trouble seeing a forklift approaching, especially when there are other pedestrians or large pieces of equipment in your line of sight.
- **If you don't see a forklift coming, you won't be able to get out of the way.**
 - Since forklifts don't brake as quickly as cars do, it might be impossible for you to react quickly enough to avoid a collision.
- **It can also be difficult to hear a forklift coming.**
 - Most forklift operators try to warn people who are in their path by sounding their horn to let you know that they are approaching.
 - They might also try to communicate verbally when possible.
 - At times your facility might be so noisy that you can't hear the horn, or the operator's instructions... and that can create a dangerous situation for everyone.
- **The most common reason that pedestrians don't know there is a forklift in the vicinity is because they aren't paying attention.**
 - If you're not aware of your surroundings when you're walking in areas where forklifts operate, you can wander right into trouble.
- **If an operator tries to swerve or brake quickly to avoid you, it could cause the forklift to tip over and crush anything in its path... including people.**
 - A forklift's brakes are less responsive than a car's, and its center of gravity is always shifting when it's in motion, which can make it very unstable.

- **While you need to be cautious when you're around forklifts, forklift operators must be cautious around you as well.**
 - Operating a forklift in a busy area can be difficult, and there are several factors beyond the operator's 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 them.
 - 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.**
 - So remember... when it's too noisy for you to hear the operator, it's too noisy for them to hear you as well.
- **The way that a forklift maneuvers can also present a challenge when they'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 the operator.
 - Just like braking or swerving quickly, turning too sharply or driving too fast could cause the forklift to tip over and injure pedestrians like you who are in the area.
- **The most common way that you 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 they'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 a forklift's operator turns, the wider the back end swings out... and the greater the risk that they can hit you if they get too close.**
 - So you not only need to be aware of where a forklift is... you need to anticipate where its back end could be if the operator makes a turn.
- **Separating pedestrians from forklifts in your facility is the quickest, easiest and most obvious way to stop collisions.**
 - Pedestrian safety won't be a problem and forklift-related accidents won't occur if forklifts and people aren't "mingling".

- **Using painted lines, hazard cones or barriers to create "pedestrian walkways" in zones where forklifts operate can let you know where it's safe to walk, as well as what areas to avoid.**
 - These pathways should be designed to keep you 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 you must walk through an area where forklifts are actively operating, your facility should provide enough space for you to stay to one side.
- **Installing convex mirrors at intersections can help operators see you when you're crossing aisles or turning corners.**
 - A mirror can also help you to see what may be coming at you.
- **Just like on the highway, speeding on a forklift can have tragic results.**
 - If an operator is moving quickly, it can be more difficult for them to detect a "blind spot", and the chances of having an accident will increase.
 - The faster a forklift approaches, the less time there is for you to get out of the way as well.
- **To reduce the risk of damage and injury, traffic control and speed limit signs should be posted in any areas where forklifts are being used.**
 - They should be in places where operators can see them.
- **Protecting everybody from harm begins with providing the proper training to anyone who is responsible for forklift pedestrian safety, including...**
 - Managers who are responsible for overall facility safety.
 - Forklift operators who may encounter pedestrians.
 - Pedestrians like you.
- **This training can help to educate everyone about safe work practices that they can use when forklifts and pedestrians are sharing a workspace.**
 - You need to be sure that you participate in any training sessions you are scheduled for.
- **Staying a safe distance away from a lift when it's in motion is one of the easiest ways to avoid an accident.**
 - 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.

- **An "exclusion zone" is an area around a moving forklift that is unsafe for you to enter.**
 - Each facility must designate a certain amount of space that needs to exist between you and the forklift when it is in motion.
- **As a general rule, the exclusion zone is at least four feet around an operating forklift.**
 - There may be times when the 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 you to know how close you can get to a forklift, your facility may 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 need to enter the exclusion zone to speak with 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 aren't allowed to approach a forklift unless the driver turns off the ignition, or dismounts from the forklift.
- **If you don't know that there's a forklift approaching, you probably won't be able to get out of its path in time to avoid an accident.**
 - That's why forklift operators take precautions to ensure that everyone can see and hear them coming.
 - So when you're walking or working around forklifts, you need to do the same.
- **There can be times when you can't get close enough to a forklift to tell an operator that you're in the area without putting yourself in danger.**
 - In these cases, you will have to find another way to make them aware of your presence.
- **The best way to let a forklift operator know you're nearby is to...**
 - Stop.
 - Look both ways.
 - Make eye contact.
 - Wait for them to signal that they see you, and that it's safe to cross.

- **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.**
 - Always wait for the operator to acknowledge you and come to a complete stop before you step in front of a forklift.
- **You can make it easier for a forklift operator to notice you by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), such as a brightly colored vest.**
 - This will make you more visible, and remind them that they should proceed with caution.
- **Just like pedestrians, forklift operators can help make themselves more visible to pedestrians as well, by using personal protective equipment (PPE).**
 - This can include high-visibility vests and brightly-colored footwear.
 - As you are walking, it's important for you to be on the lookout for these "flashes of color".
- **There will always be times when it is impossible to see a forklift approaching, but there are multiple ways that an operator can let you know they're in the area.**
 - If you listen closely, you should be able to hear indicators that there is a forklift nearby, even if you can't see it.
- **Sometimes, you might be able to hear a forklift's engine as it is approaching.**
 - However, if the forklift is battery-powered, it is usually very quiet.
 - So just listening for engine noise may not always tell you if a forklift is nearby.
- **Another sound that can let you know that there is a forklift in the vicinity is its horn.**
 - Hearing it can remind you to be cautious when you're in an area where forklifts are operating.
- **Most forklifts also have an alarm that will sound whenever the forklift is backing up.**
 - This alarm doesn't just indicate that there is a forklift nearby, it also lets you know that the operator might have limited visibility because they are driving in reverse.

- **While using your eyes and ears are great ways to protect yourself when there is a forklift in the area, it can be easy to become distracted while you're walking.**
 - If you aren't paying attention to your surroundings, you might not realize that there is a forklift coming until it's too late.
 - To keep yourself and everyone else safe, make sure that you are focused and alert when you're walking around your facility... especially when there are forklifts operating nearby.
- **To get to where you're going safely, you must know how to protect yourself while you're walking around forklifts.**
- **Pedestrians are always supposed to have the right of way, but that doesn't mean anything when there's a forklift barreling towards you... and it doesn't look like it's going to stop.**
 - It could be because the operator doesn't see you, or just isn't paying attention... either way, it's a collision waiting to happen.
- **Even if they do eventually see you, there's a chance that the forklift might lose the load that it's carrying if the operator stops too suddenly.**
 - In these situations, it is always safer to yield to the forklift, just in case the operator doesn't stop.
- **To show you where it's safe to walk, most facilities have clearly marked "pedestrian walkways" that are designed to keep you away from operating forklifts.**
 - They can be defined by signs, painted lines or physical barriers.
 - Staying "within the lines" can help keep everyone safe.
- **When you're traveling in these walkways, make sure that you keep within the boundaries, and keep moving.**
 - Blocking a walkway could result in more impatient pedestrians going around you and entering a forklift's path.
- **When you're approaching an intersection it's a different story.**
 - The last thing that you want to do is keep moving.
 - Instead, you should stop, look left, look right and then look left again to check for forklift traffic before you decide to cross.
- **Don't forget... there's more than one way to know if a forklift is coming.**
 - Taking the extra time to listen for forklifts at intersections can mean the difference between life and death.

- **Forklift drivers have a tough job... and preventing accidents involving pedestrians is just one part of it.**
 - You can make this part of their job a whole lot easier by following safe work practices yourself... and avoiding some unsafe ones as well.
- **In order to drive safely, forklift operators must have a clear, unobstructed path.**
 - If there is clutter in their way when they're driving, they might have to stop or change direction unexpectedly.
 - This could cause trouble for all of the pedestrians in the area.
 - If you notice it, remove any clutter that might be in a forklift's path, even if you didn't put it there.
- **Spills are another hazard that you can help with.**
 - Any time there is something on the floor, there is a chance that it could affect the way a forklift maneuvers.
 - If you can't take care of a spill yourself, let a supervisor know where it's located... so that they can ensure that it gets cleaned up.
- **You should never try to "beat" a forklift to an intersection so that you can cross before it gets there.**
 - There's a chance that you could misjudge where the forklift is, or that the operator could be driving above the speed limit and get there sooner than you think.
 - This could end in disaster.
- **Another thing that you should never do in an area where forklifts are operating is leave a pedestrian walkway.**
 - Your facility designed it the way they did for a reason... it's meant to keep you away from places that are unsafe to walk.
 - Anywhere outside of the walkway could be dangerous, so don't try to take shortcuts.
- **Forklift operators can't afford to take their minds off their task.**
 - It takes a lot of skill and concentration to maneuver these heavy pieces of equipment.

- **You should never do anything to distract a driver... whether it's intentional or unintentional.**
 - Walking too closely to a moving forklift or wildly waving your hands to get the operator's attention can pull their mind away from their driving.
 - Make sure that you don't do anything that could cause them to lose their focus.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **Forklift accidents can be dangerous for both forklift operators and pedestrians... so everyone needs to know why they happen, and how to prevent them.**
- **You are always responsible for your own safety when you're walking in an area where forklifts are operating, but your facility should also take steps to help prevent pedestrian-related forklift accidents.**
- **Keeping a safe distance from a forklift is the best way to prevent an accident, so be sure that you know where their "exclusion zones" are at all times ... and stay out of them.**
- **To help prevent collisions, it is vital for both you and a forklift operator to be aware of each other's presence.**
- **It's not enough to know that there is a forklift nearby... you also have to know how to walk safely in its vicinity.**
- **Forklift operators are not the only ones who are responsible for pedestrian safety... you must do your part to help prevent forklift accidents as well.**
- **If everyone works together to prevent forklift accidents, you can make your facility a much safer place!**