

28
March
2022

WSH ALERT

FATAL ACCIDENT

Worker pinned by overturned forklift

On 21 March 2022, an operator was driving a forklift down an uneven sloped surface at a shipyard when it overturned. The operator was rescued from under the forklift and sent to the hospital where he later passed away.

The forklift was fitted with a self-made boom attachment to carry a suspended load. The operator was not wearing a seat belt at the time of the accident.



Overview of accident scene.

Recommendations

Improper use of forklifts can result in fatality or serious injury even to trained operators. There was a similar accident on 23 February 2022, where a worker was thrown off an overturned forklift ([see WSH Alert](#)). To prevent similar accidents, consider the following measures:

- **Authorised operator:** Allow only competent, licensed and authorised operators to operate forklifts.
- **Proper use of forklift:** Do not hang loads from forklifts, whether from any attachment or the forks, unless approved by the manufacturer. In general, forklift loads should be placed on a pallet supported by the forks. Improper use of forklifts to hoist or hang objects can affect its stability, causing the forklift to overturn.
- **Manufacturer-approved attachments:** Self-made and third party attachments can affect forklift safety. Do not use such attachments unless approved by the forklift manufacturer.
- **Safe loading:** Never exceed the forklift's rated load capacity. Handle all loads according to the height and weight restrictions in the load chart. Instruct operators to stop the forklift immediately if the load becomes unbalanced.
- **Safe ground condition:** Operators must be aware of and drive carefully on slopes and poor ground condition (e.g. uneven ground). Slopes with a gradient of more than 10% should be clearly marked. Design slopes with a smooth gradual change at the top and bottom to prevent unbalancing the load.
- **Seat belt:** Instruct operators to put on their seat belts once in the forklift. The seat belt prevents the operator from being thrown out of the cabin or pinned by the forklift in the event of an accident. Explore the use of technology to enable the forklift to work only if the seat belt is buckled.

For more information, please refer to SS 573: 2012 Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Powered Counterbalanced Forklifts, [WSH Guidelines for the Safe Operation of Forklift Trucks](#) and WSH Council's [Forklift Safety Pack](#).

* Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 23 March 2022. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please also note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

Workplace injuries tend to rise around this time of the year. Remain vigilant against risks and prevent accidents.

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