Pedestrian Safety Around Forklifts

Introduction:

Does your company use forklifts on the job? Having an effective forklift safety program is critical for assuring compliance, minimizing damage to equipment, and protecting employees from injury or death. Thousands of workers are injured or killed in forklift-related accidents every year in the United States, and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 20% of all forklift accidents involve a pedestrian. These accidents occur when a forklift strikes a pedestrian or when a pedestrian is struck by something falling from a forklift. Most of these injuries or deaths can be avoided with proper training and awareness. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) many workers may not be aware of the risks of operating or working near forklifts, and are not following the procedures in the OSHA standards or equipment manufacturer's guidelines.

Discussion Points:

- Having an effective forklift safety program is critical for assuring compliance
- Pedestrians should remain aware of their surroundings
- Communicate with forklift operators, and follow workplace safety policies at all times

Discussion:

OSHA requires forklift and pedestrian safety training for all employees. Once the safety training is complete, drivers should have the skills and knowledge necessary to avoid accidents and make the workplace safer and more productive. For their own safety, pedestrians should remain aware of their surroundings, communicate with forklift operators, and follow workplace safety policies at all times.

Pedestrians can protect themselves when working near forklifts by listening for sounds of engines, horns, and backup alarms, and watching for flashing lights. To maintain awareness of where forklifts are, workers should avoid distractions when walking near forklifts; they should stop and look both ways before crossing an aisle, walking across an intersection, or approaching a blind corner. Pedestrians should never walk under an elevated load, must not be closer than three feet from a moving forklift, should stand clear of a forklift while it is turning, and never approach a moving forklift. If a pedestrian must approach a forklift, he/she should stay back from the forklift until the driver sees him/her and makes eye contact, and wait for the driver to stop the forklift. He/she should approach the forklift from the side after it has stopped and the driver motions him/her over. When approaching the forklift, the pedestrian should be careful to keep his/her feet away from the forklift, and walk away before the driver moves the forklift. If the workplace has designated walkways for pedestrians, they should be kept clear of material and debris. In areas where pedestrians and forklifts have to travel the same path, forklifts drivers should yield right of way to pedestrians. If there is not enough room for pedestrians to walk safely, the area must be closed off to pedestrians while forklifts are in use.

Taking necessary precautions to separate pedestrians from forklift traffic by providing

pedestrian walkways, permanent railings, protective barriers, walkway striping on floors, and installing mirrors at blind aisle intersections are important measures for providing safety for all pedestrians.

As always, stay safe out there!