Stop, Look, and Listen: Pedestrian Safety at Work

Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Workplace traffic can be every bit as dangerous as that found on the city streets. In a collision between a 2000-pound industrial vehicle and a 200-pound person, the pedestrian is very likely to come out the loser.

What's the Danger?

Low light and poor visibility, high traffic volume, increased stopping distances and decreased vehicle responsiveness, are just some of the factors that up the danger level for pedestrians in the workplace.

Here's a chilling real-life example of a deadly pedestrian incident at work. An Arizona woman lay dead for three days while her husband frantically searched for her. Truck driver Sheila Ross was struck and accidentally pushed and pinned inside a lettuce truck while it was being loaded. No one witnessed the collision and apparently the forklift operator was unaware of the incident. Sheila's body was discovered three days later by a dock worker. The weight of the material that pinned her down, caused her to suffocate.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are 8 reminders about pedestrian safety to take with you as you walk through your day:

1. Wear a reflective vest.
2. Stick to walkways and designated crosswalks. Don't take shortcuts.
3. Stay alert. Don't get so lost in conversation, your phone, or deep thought that you don't notice the hazards around you.
4. Remove your earbuds. Forklift operators often sound horns to warn pedestrians, but if you're wearing earbuds and listening to music, you're not only less likely to hear a horn, you may also be unaware of what's going on around you and walk right into the path of moving machinery.
5. Look ALL ways before crossing a traffic lane, including behind and beside you for any vehicles turning in from alleys or side streets.
6. Avoid approaching a forklift from the side. If the forklift suddenly backs up and turns sharply, someone approaching from the side can easily be struck.

7. Don’t rely on traffic control devices. A “walk” sign only means that you may proceed if it’s safe to do so.
8. Never assume that vehicle drivers see you and never assume they will stop. Make eye contact with drivers and wait for permission to pass, even if the vehicle has stopped.

Final Word

As a forklift operator, you do everything you can to warn workers on foot of your presence. One of your coworkers, is in a world of her own. She is always looking at her phone as she walks through the warehouse, and has walked in front of your forklift more than once. How should you handle it?