Working Safely Around Forklifts Fatality File

Maintenance Worker Struck by Forklift Carriage – Tennessee

a 51-year-old maintenance worker was crushed by the forks of a forklift he was repairing. At the time of the incident, the maintenance worker was working below the elevated forks, replacing a hydraulic seal on the forklift carriage lift mechanism while the carriage and forks were supported by resting the fork tips on the edge of a shipping container. The forklift operator was standing next to the forklift. As the maintenance worker tightened a hydraulic fitting, the fork tips slipped off the container edge. The carriage and forks fell, striking his head and pinning him underneath. The forklift operator radioed to call 911. Emergency medical services dispatched to the incident, and the maintenance worker was transferred to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Key contributing factors identified in this investigation include:

- Lack of specific written maintenance procedures for hydraulic seal replacement.
- Working under an elevated, unsecured forklift carriage.
- Lack of job and task analysis to identify the hazard.
- End of work shift.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NIOSH investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Establish an equipment maintenance and inspection program and ensure workers follow manufacturer and company safety guidelines for repair and maintenance of equipment.
- Develop, implement, and train workers on proper hazardous energy control procedures, specifically unsecured elevated loads.
- Ensure only trained, authorized personnel maintain, repair, adjust, and inspect powered industrial trucks, and provide periodic refresher training.
- Complete job and task hazard analyses and train workers on the results of these analyses.