

FORKLIFT FATALITIES

OSHA estimates forklifts cause about 85 *fatal* accidents per year; 34,900 accidents result in serious injury; and 61,800 are classified as non-serious. According to the Industrial Truck Association, there are about 855,900 forklifts in the U.S. Therefore, over 11% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident each year (assuming only one accident per forklift).

The ITA also reports that the useful life of a lift truck is about 8 years. This means that about 90% of all forklifts will be involved in some type of accident during their useful life--again assuming only one accident per forklift. If you operate this equipment, there is a possibility that *you* may have an accident at some point during your career. To help reduce the possibility of being injured, it's important to understand where and how these accidents occur.

Fatal Accident Type	%	Where fatalities occur	%
Crushed by vehicle tipping over	42%	Mining	1.2
Crushed between vehicle and a surface	25%	Construction	23.8
Crushed between two vehicles	11%	Manufacturing	42.5
Struck or run over by a forklift	10%	Transportation	11.0
Struck by falling material	8%	Wholesale trades	12.5
Fall from platform on the forks	4%	Retail trade	9.0

Studies show that **many of these accidents could have been prevented by better training. No one starts out with the innate knowledge, skills, and abilities to safely operate a forklift.** As OSHA requires, drivers must be properly trained to do so. The lesson to be learned is, *operating a forklift without training is dangerous and can even be fatal to you or other employees working in the area.*

Training can also prevent or reduce the severity of an accident related to the stability of a lift truck traveling with an elevated load. **Keep the load as low as possible** to increase vehicle stability and to help prevent tip-over accidents. Even if drivers ignore this rule, and the vehicle tips over, injuries are usually minor if they stay with the vehicle instead of jumping off. The normal tendency is for a person to jump downward, so the driver lands on the floor or ground--usually directly into the path of the overhead guard. The most common result is a crushing injury to the head, neck, or back where the overhead guard strikes the employee.

Forty-two percent of forklift fatalities are caused by the operator trying to jump from a tipping vehicle. To keep this from happening to you, always remember to *keep the load as low as possible and stay with the vehicle if it tips over.* **Wearing your seat belt is the best safety measure!**