RM Insight®

Forklifts and pedestrian safety in the workplace

Forklifts are used for a range of workplace activities from transferring loads around a facility to stacking, lifting and picking goods.

Each year, both deaths and serious injuries are associated with forklift use in Australia. In Victoria, on average 250 people are seriously injured from accidents involving forklifts each year, with co-workers and pedestrians most at risk[1]. Therefore, the effective identification, assessment and control of hazards associated with forklift use are essential to ensure pedestrian, co-worker and forklift operator safety.

Managing the hazards

When conducting a risk assessment on the use of forklifts, consider if they can be eliminated by substituting other load moving equipment. If forklifts cannot be eliminated, consider designing the layout of the workplace to remove interactions between pedestrians and vehicles.

Further risk mitigation examples for forklift use, include to:

- establish and maintain a site-specific Traffic Management Plan refer to RM Insight Newsletter. To access please go to: www.vero.com.au/vero/business-insurance/risk-management
- ensure adequate training, licensing and competency is maintained for all drivers
- ensure vehicles are well maintained and used in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines
- conduct pre-start safety checks
- establish safe work procedures and training to ensure understanding including the wearing of seat belts (unless a risk assessment indicates a different method of restraint is more suitable)
- ensure drivers have clear visibility at all times, and that loads are secure
- ensure gas cylinders are adequately secured on forklifts and stored and handled appropriately as per the relevant Australian Standards. Additionally, RM Insight Newsletter, Forklift battery charging – Fire hazard details the hazards associated with charging forklift batteries. To access a copy please go to: www.vero.com.au/vero/business-insurance/risk-management
- establish pedestrian and forklift exclusion zones
- establish safe zones for vehicle drivers whilst forklift loading and unloading activities are occurring
- minimise blind spots and highlight intersections
- utilise visible and audible warning devices
- establish safety barriers, fences and designated visible pedestrian zones where required
- ensure forklifts are fitted with speed limiting devices
- establish clear and legible signage and the wearing of high visibility clothing in forklift areas
- manage the risks posed by the environment in which the vehicle is operating such as overhead powerlines, manufacturing equipment, other vehicles and sloping or slippery surfaces
- separate pedestrian doors at vehicle entry and exit points
- utilise engineering controls like interlocked gates, proximity alarms and telemetry
- ensure adequate lighting and ventilation.

All control measures utilised in the workplace should be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective. Safety audits should also be conducted to ensure safe work practices are being adhered to. All visitors and third parties to the site through the induction process should be made aware of the Traffic Management Plan and specific risks and requirements when in forklift areas.

To minimise injuries from forklifts in the workplace effective identification, assessment and control of hazards associated with forklift use are essential in conjunction with constant review and monitoring.

[1] www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/pages/safety-and-prevention/health-and-safety-topics/forklifts

For more information:
www.vero.com.au/vero/business-insurance/risk-management
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