Electric Pallet Jacks Fatality File

Employee’s Foot Is Crushed Between Pallet Jack and Stairs

An employee was in the order staging area operating a Hyster electric pallet jack. After obtaining the pallet jack in the order staging area, the employee drove it to a stack of bread that needed to be moved to the order selector lines.

When he had delivered the bread, the employee drove the pallet jack back to where he had obtained it near a set of stairs spanning a conveyor system in the order staging area. As the employee approached the stairs, he let the handle of the pallet jack move upward to its normal position to apply the brake, while simultaneously stepping off of the pallet jack. However, because the brakes of the pallet jack did not function properly, it failed to stop.

The employee had already stepped off of the pallet jack and was attempting to jump back on to get out of the pallet jack’s path of travel, when his left foot was crushed between the pallet jack and the stairs. The employee was hospitalized. The employee’s direct supervisor was the area supervisor and was in his office at the time of the incident. The employee stated that another coworker had operated the pallet jack earlier on the day of the incident and that he himself had operated it one week prior to the incident at which time he had noticed the brakes were not functioning properly and brought it to the attention of his foreman.

The coworker, who used the pallet jack before the employee, was not identified. The coworker stated that he had used the same pallet jack the day before the incident and that his foreman had told him not to use it. The foreman was going to place a sign on it warning that it should not be used.