Forklift Fatality Carries Lessons

Forklifts and worker-congested pathways can be a deadly mix, especially when forklift operators haven’t been trained properly.

A Tampa, FL-area subcontractor, Southeast Industrial Sales & Service, has been fined almost $10,000 in connection with a fatal incident at a chemical plant in Bartow, FL, in January, 2007.

A forklift struck and killed 64-year-old safety director Roy Eugene Davis. Making his death even more devastating was the fact that Davis retired from his 30-year job only days earlier and had accepted a call to come back on a part-time basis.

He was initially struck and knocked over, before being run over by one of the machine’s front tires. The operator, who was hauling debris, reportedly was not aware that a bucket on the machine had struck Davis, rendering him unconscious.

Southeast Industrial Sales & Service was cited for not properly training a forklift operator and for failing to keep a clear path for the forklift to travel, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). An investigation revealed that the area in which the forklift was operating was crowded with employees.

Could this sort of incident occur at your facility? What measures do you have in place to prevent any unintentional contact between workers and forklifts?