Material Storage: Pallets, Racks, Overlots and Falling Objects Fatality File

US Department of Labor finds lack of training, other failures led forklift operator to suffer fatal injuries at Elm Mott tire distribution facility

What Happened

In June 2024, a forklift operator at Mitchell Industrial Tire Co. Inc.’s distribution center in Elm Mott, Texas was struck and killed by a falling pallet of industrial truck tires after a three-tier rack storage system failed. The rack’s vertical supports were damaged and the horizontal beam locks were missing — defects that left the structure unable to hold its load. When the system gave way, the pallet fell directly onto the operator below.

What Went Wrong

OSHA found damaged rack uprights, missing beam locks, unbanded pallets stored above 16 feet, and untrained forklift operators. The structural defects were known conditions that had never been repaired or removed from service. The company was cited for 12 violations and faced $288,299 in proposed penalties.

The Bottom Line

A damaged rack, missing beam locks, and overheight storage created the conditions for this fatality long before the pallet fell. Rack systems must be inspected regularly, damaged components must be taken out of service immediately, and storage limits must be enforced on every shift — not just during audits.

Source: https://www.dol.gov/