Multi-Tasking Distractions: When Workers Have to Juggle It All Fatality File

CEO killed at industrial site by worker operating forklift while talking on the phone

What Happened

On March 21, 2024, a company CEO was struck and killed by a forklift at the HL-GA Battery Company construction site in Georgia. The victim had walked across a road on the active worksite when the forklift operator – who was talking on his phone while driving – did not see him and struck him. The operator then left the forklift and walked away without stopping to check on the victim. The CEO was also not wearing the required high-visibility vest, which compounded the visibility failure on both sides.

What Went Wrong

OSHA's investigation found that the forklift operator was using his phone while operating the vehicle – a direct distraction that eliminated the situational awareness needed to safely navigate a worksite with pedestrians present. Multiple companies were cited, including HL-GA Battery Company and the contractor employing the forklift operator. The site had already experienced prior serious injuries in the months leading up to this fatality.

The Bottom Line

A single phone call while operating a piece of heavy equipment was enough to kill a person. Distraction in the workplace is not a minor productivity issue – it is a physical hazard. Any task that requires awareness of surroundings, moving equipment, or other

workers demands full, undivided attention from start to finish.

Source: https://www.wlbt.com/