Powered Industrial Trucks (Forklifts) Fatality File

Truck Driver Fatally Injured When the Forklift He Was Operating Falls off a Loading Dock – Massachusetts

A 51-year-old male truck driver (victim) was fatally injured while operating a stand-up forklift on an elevated loading dock at a produce center. The forklift fell off the loading dock causing the victim to fall out of the forklift operator's area and the forklift then landed partially on top of him. A co-worker immediately placed a call for emergency medical services (EMS). Then about 20 people, some who were co-workers, lifted the forklift off of the victim. The local police and EMS arrived at the incident location within minutes. The victim was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead five days later.

Contributing factors identified in this investigation included operating forklifts on loading docks with no protective edge barriers and the lack of a forklift operator restraint system. The Massachusetts FACE Program concluded that to prevent similar occurrences in the future, employers should:

- Prohibit forklifts from loading dock locations that are not equipped with protective edge barriers; and
- Consider installing protective barriers at the loading dock edge to minimize the possibility of employees and equipment falling off the loading dock.

In addition, forklift manufacturers should:

- Adopt and implement the concept of Prevention through Design (PtD) and redesign the stand-up counterbalanced forklift operator area to include restraint systems.