

Members' Corner

Fork Lift Driver Training – For Pedestrians!

David Hughes, Hughes Business Services

David is a Past Chairman of BHSEA and has many years' experience throughout industry in the West Midlands. One of his principal business functions has been as an approved Fork Lift Training Instructor and his experiences over many years were the inspiration for today's Members' Corner presentation.

David's unconventional approach to this topic was given away in the title – because most employers do not give a second thought to training *pedestrians* in the black art of forklift driving. And yet, it takes two to have a collision and it's nearly always the pedestrian who comes off worst!

David's strategy is founded on the basic safety management principle of

“Removing/Reducing Hazards at the crucial FLT/Pedestrian interface. His main objective is to achieve this by raising pedestrian awareness of FLT-related hazards by targeted training. He considers that most employees in production departments, storage/warehouse departments and others (like visitors) who have access to Yard/Car Park areas are at risk. If all of these persons have a greater appreciation of the principles that make a good FLT driver, David maintains, then they are more likely to modify their own behaviour to reduce risk to themselves. In most companies, this means everyone, at some time, each day!

The first point that David makes is that FLT drivers have a very restricted field of view, even if unobstructed completely by any load! So it behaves any pedestrian to view the movement of an FLT with extreme caution. A prosecution this week illustrates that only too tragically! The threat is aggravated, of course, by speed of travel, lack of audible warning (Electric trucks are so silent, gas trucks are very quiet



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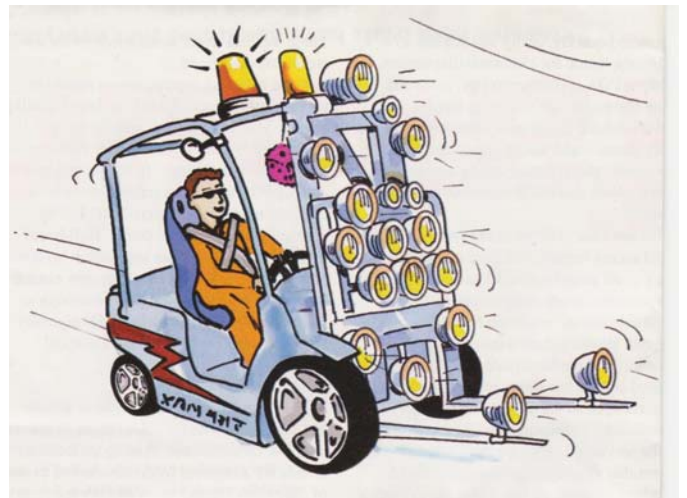
and even diesel noise is easily masked by ambient sound levels), instability when loaded and rear end swing when turning.

One of the best risk control measures to adopt, of course, is segregation of vehicles and pedestrians by use of barriers to slow down/divert pedestrians from collision areas. Establishment of segregated walkways is essential and it is crucial to provide separate doors at entrances and exits. The Moral there is – Always use them! Sometimes though, these exits can present hazards if door curtains get scratched and dirty, rise up in front of the drivers cab as the FLT passes through, reflect light, or even reduce the audibility of the vehicle horn!

David went on to say that the driver is also concentrating on many simultaneous risks, so that pedestrians must also make extra allowance for this source of distraction by being extra cautious. Darkness, Wet/Cold/Icy conditions can all reduce performance of the driver and/or the vehicle, in addition to causing the pedestrian to slip, trip or fall. An added factor here is the effect of poor maintenance, if FLTs are not regularly serviced and undergo a rigorous Daily, pre-Shift check. Unfortunately, David added, many firms operate on a “If it Ain’t Broke, Don’t Mend It” basis, which can lead to a progressively, deteriorating truck performance that aggravates all the other risks until an accident occurs.

Finally, David concluded, experience has proved that whilst most operators are *Sensible* and operate *Correctly* (more or less) Most of the time, Sadly there are some rogue operators who are rather ‘Macho’ and Operate Unsafely Most of the Time!

Pedestrians would do well to recognise the early signs of such aberrations and take early evasive action, whilst taking care not to collide with other pedestrians, of course!



His concluding advice was “Beware – being near to FLTs is potentially VERY DANGEROUS!