

5
January
2023

WSH ALERT

FATAL ACCIDENT

Unsafe use of forklift: Worker struck by toppled machine

On 27 December 2022, a worker was guiding a forklift to position its forks under a machine. However, the machine toppled onto the worker. He was sent to the hospital where he passed away.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the forks of the forklift were raised before they were fully inserted under the machine. The lifting of the partially-inserted forks caused the machine to topple.



Video capture of the accident.

In 2022, there were six cases of forklift-related fatal workplace accidents. Two cases involved workers being crushed under forklifts that toppled from unbalanced loads, another two cases involved workers being run over or crushed by moving forklifts, and the remaining two, including this case, involved forklift forks toppling objects onto workers. Read more on these [cases and other forklift related resources](#).

As forklift accidents can lead to serious injuries and death, the WSH Council calls on all companies using forklifts to undertake an urgent assessment of their safety measures in the use of forklifts.

What companies should do

Companies should urgently assess and ensure that their WSH management system includes the following measures or checks:

- **Competent forklift operator:** Allow only competent and authorised persons to operate forklifts. Ensure all forklift operators have completed the necessary certifications such as the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) Operate Forklift Course. Require forklift operators to attend [refresher training](#) at least once every three years.
- **Safe Work Procedure (SWP):** Implement a SWP for moving heavy equipment/machines. Consult the manufacturer for advice on how specific equipment/machines can be moved safely.
- **Safe forking operation:** Instruct forklift operators to carry out the following when using forks to pick up a load, and ensure that the operator has a clear view of the lifting operation:
 1. Check that the spread of the forks is suitable for the width of the load.
 2. Insert the forks under the load fully or as far as possible.
 3. Raise the forks slightly to check that the load is stable on the forks.
 4. Tilt back the forks slightly to prevent slippage before moving off with the load.

Wherever possible, loads ought to be placed on pallets as pallets enable safer load handling. Loads that may topple or fall and endanger a worker must be properly secured onto the pallet before being moved.

- **Safe work zone:** Require forklift operators to confirm all workers are in a safe position before starting operations. When picking up a load, the operator must only raise the forks when there is no one in the danger zone# should the load topple. Authorise operators to stop forklift operations once anyone comes into an unsafe position.

"danger zone": refers to an area where one can get injured

- **Hazard communication and work supervision:** Communicate to workers the possible on-site hazards and risk controls in place before allowing forklift operations to begin. Deploy a supervisor to oversee operations and ensure that the work is carried out as per SWP.

For more information, refer to the Singapore Standard SS 573: 2012 Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Powered Counterbalanced Forklifts, and [WSH Council's WSH Guidelines on Safe Operation of Forklifts](#) and [Forklift Safety Pack](#).

Under the WSH Act, first-time corporate offenders may be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$500,000 whilst individuals can either be sentenced to the maximum fine of \$200,000 and/or an imprisonment not exceeding 2 years. Read more on the [WSH Act penalties](#).

During the Heightened Safety Period (1 September 2022 to 28 February 2023), the Ministry of Manpower will impose severe actions for serious WSH lapses, which include:

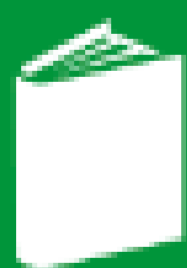
- Debarment from hiring new work pass holders
- Company leaders to personally account to MOM and take responsibility for rectifications
- Engaging external auditors to conduct a thorough review of company's WSH processes

* Information on the accident is based on preliminary investigations by the Ministry of Manpower as at 3 January 2023. This may be subject to change as investigations are still on-going. Please also note that the recommendations provided here are not exhaustive and they are meant to enhance workplace safety and health so that a recurrence may be prevented. The information and recommendations provided are not to be construed as implying liability on any party nor should it be taken to encapsulate all the responsibilities and obligations under the law.

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