

24  
May  
2023

## WSH ALERT

## FATAL ACCIDENT

## Technician pinned by forklift mast

On 28 April 2023, a technician was preparing to carry out repair works on a forklift when the forklift's mast fell on him. The technician was pronounced dead at the scene by attending paramedics.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the locking pins of the mast were removed without first securing the mast.



Fallen forklift Mast

Forks of another forklift (not there at time of accident) used to raise the fallen mast

Location of the technician

Scene of the accident.

Workers involved in vehicular repair may be exposed to physical hazards when working with vehicle parts or engine components. The WSH Council calls on all companies carrying out vehicular repair to ensure worker safety and undertake an assessment of their safety measures.

## What companies should do

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

- **Competent worker:** Deploy only trained and authorised forklift technicians to assemble/ disassemble, repair or maintain a forklift. Only workers who have completed the WSQ Operate Forklift course are allowed to move and operate the forklift.
- **Safe work method:** Provide workers with the Safe Work Procedure (SWP) for mast disassembly. The SWP must include steps to control the risk of forklift masts falling onto workers.

To prevent the mast from toppling, it must be either properly secured or held in place before any locking pins are removed. Securing may be achieved, for example, by attaching the mast to a suitable support structure. The mast may be held in place, for example, by using a hoist, crane, or the forks of another forklift.

Consult the forklift manufacturer for specific advice on how the mast may be safely removed for the model.

- **Safe work position:** Brief workers on the risk of mast toppling during mast disassembly, mark out the mast fall zone, and ensure no one is in the fall zone before the mast locking pins are removed.
- **Work supervision:** Provide on-site supervision to ensure workers are aware of the hazards present and that the SWP is followed closely.

For more information, refer to [Code of Practice on WSH Risk Management](#), Chapter 8 (Maintenance and Servicing) of the [WSH Guidelines on Safe Operation of Forklift Trucks](#), and Chapter 4.4 (Maintenance of Machines) of the [WSH Guidelines on Safe Use of Machinery](#).

Other relevant resources include UK Health and Safety Executive's guidance document "[Health and Safety in Motor Vehicle Repair and Associated Industries](#)" and US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's fatal accident report "[Maintenance Worker Struck by Forklift Carriage](#)".

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 extended Heightened Safety Period (1 September 2022 to 31 May 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, and attend a mandatory half-day in-person WSH training course.
- 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 4 May 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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