

# Lake County Contractors Association

## Safety News

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April, 1999

**Scaffold – Fall Protection Double Header Offered** – May 19 LCCA will present a safety double header. At 8:00 a.m., we will present a 4-hour Scaffold Hazard Awareness course designed to teach you how to recognize and avoid hazards associated with scaffolds. This course is designed for employees who work on scaffolds and their supervision. It is not for those responsible for erecting scaffold systems.

At 1:00 p.m., we feature Fall Protection. OSHA has complicated fall protection with changing standards and multiple options. This course is for users of fall protection and their supervision. Mike Barnhart will teach both classes.

**Ups & Downs of OSHA's New Forklift Rules**  
**By George Kennedy, Safety Director**  
**National Utility Contractors Association**  
**Utility Contractor, February 1999**

Contractors, manufacturers, and suppliers who use forklifts in their operations will have to educate and train all employees who operate forklifts, including occasional operators. OSHA defines powered industrial trucks as "mobile, power-propelled trucks used to carry, push, pull, lift, stack, or tier material." The term includes rough-terrain forklifts. Whether a forklift is used in the yard, shop, plant or at the jobsite, the regulation applies.

The standard also covers powered industrial trucks equipped with, or modified to accept, attachments that let them move odd-shaped material or carry out tasks not envisioned when the trucks were designed. The standard does not cover vehicles used for earth-moving or over-the-road hauling.

OSHA issued the new requirements to insure that operators are properly trained before operating equipment, except in situations that do not endanger the trainee or other employees and only under an instructor's direct supervision. The construction industry has an estimated 46,000 powered industrial trucks in use.

The new provisions mandate a training program that bases the amount and type of training required on the operator's prior knowledge and skill, types of vehicle to be operated, workplace hazards, and the operator's demonstrated ability to safely operate the vehicles. Trainers must have the knowledge, training, and experience to train operators and evaluate their competence.

Training must combine formal instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning, videos, and written material), hands-on training, and an evaluation of the operator's skills. Each type of powered industrial truck has its own unique characteristics and some inherent hazards. Effective training will address specific vehicles the employee will operate.

Refresher training is required if the operator is involved in an accident or a near-miss incident or has been observed operating the vehicle in an unsafe manner. If during an evaluation a supervisor determines that the operator needs additional training, it must be provided. Refresher training is also required when there are changes in the workplace that could affect safe vehicle operation or when the operator is assigned to a different type of truck.

Evaluations of each operator's performance are required as part of the initial and refresher training. Operators must be evaluated at least once every three years. The employer must certify that each operator has been trained and evaluated. The certification must include operator name, date of training, date of evaluation and the names of trainers and evaluators.

**A Look At the Hazards** - Effective powered industrial truck training programs must address four major areas of concern: (1) general hazards that apply to all or most of these vehicles, (2) hazards associated with particular truck types, (3) hazards generally found in most workplaces, and (4) hazards on particular worksites.

The training requirements are performance-oriented to permit employers to tailor their program to the characteristics of

their workplaces and vehicles.

Powered industrial trucks are used to move large objects or a number of smaller objects on pallets or in boxes, crates, or other containers. Different vehicle types, makes, and models have their own hazards. For example, a sit-down, counterbalanced high-lift rider truck is more likely to be involved in a falling-load accident than a motorized hand truck.

**Match Training To Machines** - Likewise, methods for preventing accidents and protecting employees vary for different types of trucks. For example, operators of sit-down rider trucks are often injured in tip-over accidents when they attempt to jump clear of the vehicle as it tips over. Because the natural tendency is to jump downward, the operator lands on the ground and is then crushed by the vehicle's overhead guard. Therefore, operators of sit-down trucks equipped with roll-over protection (ROPS) must be instructed to wear seat belts, remain in their seats during a tip-over accident, and lean away from the direction of the fall to minimize the potential for injury.

On the other hand, when a stand-up rider truck tips over, the truck operator can exit the vehicle by simply stepping backward, perpendicular to the direction of the vehicle's fall, to avoid being crushed. In this situation, the operator usually should attempt to jump clear of the vehicle and should be trained accordingly.

**Learn The Limitations** - Many hazards arise from not observing vehicles' limitations. Driving forklifts at excessive speeds can cause loss of control, often followed by skidding, tip-overs, or falls from loading docks or other elevated surfaces. Another hazard is created by the truck's load obscuring the operator's vision. Danger can also arise when the operator moves a load, causing a shift in the vehicle's center of gravity. When a load is raised or moved away from the vehicle, stability decreases. When the load is lowered or moved closer, stability increases.

Workplaces also present various hazards. These include rough, uneven, or sloped surfaces; unusual loads; hazardous areas (e.g. narrow aisles, blind spots, or intersections); pedestrian traffic/ and employees working near the vehicle's path.

Hazards are also created by improper work practices, including poor loading and carrying unauthorized passengers. Workers have fallen from trucks while trying to change light bulbs on overhead fixtures or riding on the forks to manually retrieve items from high places. Poor truck maintenance can lead to hazards such as overexposure to carbon monoxide, brake loss, or ruptured hydraulic lines.

Operator training requirements are nothing new to the construction industry. Under OSHA's General Safety and Health Provisions, "the employer shall permit only those employees qualified by training or experience to operate equipment and machinery." The new standard however, includes more specific requirements for the training program's content and for operator evaluation.

**OSHA Proposes New Toilet Rules** – A new draft revised sanitation standard would require employers to permit employees to use toilet facilities on an "as needed basis" and inspect all toilet facilities to maintain them in a clean, sanitary and well stocked condition. And don't forget a prior court ruling that you must also keep graffiti and other "objectionable" writing off the facilities.

Another major proposed change would require hot water in toilet facilities "where practical." Unfortunately, your local OSHA inspector will be determining what is practical! Before this can be implemented, it must be submitted for public comment. We will keep track of its progress.

**OSHA Plans Final Rules** – According to OSHA Administrator Charles Jeffress, the agency will publish final rules on Steel Erection and Personal Protection during 1999. In addition, they are considering proposed rules for confined space.

OSHA will also consider amendments to existing fall protection standards as they apply to roofing work and standards for vendors delivering materials.

This is a very aggressive schedule for the year and one that could mean more problems for contractors.

**Tool Box Talks – Your Best Defense** – The OSHA inspector has just shown up on your job and you are now on the defensive. If he finds a violation that occurred because an employee did not do their job, you will pay the price unless you can prove:

1. You have a rule
2. The rule was distributed to the employee

3. The employee was trained, and

4. You enforced the rule.

Tool Box Talks are the best way to document that an employee has been trained in a specific rule. Use it!

**Safety News is a service of LCCA's Safety Committee, 1312 Washington St., Waukegan, IL**

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