

HAZARD



ALERT

CRUSHED UNDER A STACK OF WOODEN PALLETS

A worker lost his life when a stack of hard wood pallets fell on him.

The worker was inspecting pallets on a conveyor. At the time of the accident, he had his back turned away from the pallet stacking area. An industrial lift truck operator had just placed a large stack of 18 pallets in the area, and was backing the lift truck away. While doing so, he raised the forks before they were entirely cleared from the stack. This caused the stack to topple over and fatally strike the worker.



The WHSCC investigation revealed that the causes of the accident were:

- the worker was positioned in a blind spot in front of the industrial lift truck;
- the lift truck was moving unsecured material;
- the worker was working with his back to the hazards in the pallet stacking area;
- failure to respect the internal policy limiting the height of pallet stacks to nine pallets; and
- although the industrial lift truck operator was trained, he had not operated that particular industrial lift truck before.

Recommended Preventive Actions

Installation of a physical barrier limiting the height of pallet stacks and preventing higher stacks from entering the work area.

Employers must ensure that industrial lift truck operators are trained on and familiar with the equipment they are using. Competency on one model does not ensure competency on another. [Section 216(1)(b) Reg. 91-191]

Conduct a task analysis to determine safe movement of unsecured materials near passageways and workstations. A subsequent task analysis recommended:

- fencing that would prevent the materials from falling in passageways,
- a wall or barrier to protect workstation areas; and
- a modification to the work procedure ensuring that the industrial lift truck operators deposit materials in a safe manner.

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