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Forklift Safety > Newsletter

Are Seat Belts Required on Forklifts?



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Have a forklift safety story or photo to share?

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ANSI/ASSE Z490.1 *Criteria for Accepted Practices in Safety, Health, and Environmental Training*

We have all heard the excuses as to why operators don't want to wear seat belts:

"I don't have time; I'm up and down on the forklift all day long."

"My forklift doesn't even have seat belts."

"If OSHA required seat belts it would say so in the rules."

While it is true that OSHA regulations don't specifically say that seat belts are required to be used they do enforce the use of seat belts.

Section 5(a) (1) of the OSH Act requires employers to protect employees from serious and recognized hazards. Forklift tip over is a recognized hazard. OSHA has issued four letters of interpretation on this issue from 1996 to 1998. In addition National Consensus Standard ASME B56.1-1993 requires the use of an operator restraint system when equipped on a powered industrial truck.



Statistically 42% of fatalities each year are caused by forklift tip over. The operator is typically killed by the overhead guard while being thrown from or attempting to escape the falling forklift. The use of seat belts is the best method of protecting employees in the event of a tip over.

Forklifts manufactured after 1992 are required to have operator restraint systems. For forklifts manufactured before that date, when an employer has been made aware of an operator restraint system retrofit program, then OSHA may cite employers who have not taken advantage of the program. It is recommended that you contact the manufacturer.

As for the excuse of "I'm up and down on the forklift all day long", that is all it is, an excuse. Once you get in the habit of wearing your seat belt it will become natural for you to wear it the same as when operating an automobile. And, it could save your life in the event of a tip over!

