

May, 2014

Edited by Bruce Hulberg

Forklift Safety: Newsletter

Backup alarms: Required?



Safety and Rescue Training

for high-hazard work activities

Confined Space

Fall Protection

Excavation

Forklift

Forklift Train the Trainer Schedule

June 2 - Boardman

June 10 - Portland

July 22 - Eugene

September 23 - Salem

September 30 - Medford

October 21—Eugene

Register online at:

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Our programs reflect:

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

Backup alarms generate a lot of discussion. They can be annoying in an already noisy environment, and operators have even been known to stuff material into the horn to muffle the sound. But this equipment plays an essential safety role. I'm guessing that everyone reading this has, at one time, been alerted by the beep-beep-beep of an approaching vehicle.



So do you need them? In general, yes. But the answer isn't quite that simple.

OSHA does not specifically require backup alarms on powered industrial trucks. However, the following regulations allude to the need for them when a vehicle has an obstructed view to the rear:

- ◆ OSHA Construction 29 CFR 1926.601(b)(4), 29 CFR 1926.602(a)(9)(ii), 29 CFR 1926.952(a)(3).
- ◆ OSHA General Industry 29 CFR 1910.269(p)(1)(ii).
- ◆ MSHA 30 CFR 77.410 - Forklifts are to be equipped with backup alarms or other warning devices.

Oregon is one of the few states that specifically state they require backup alarms. OAR 437-002-0227(5)(c) "*Vehicles with an obstructed view to the rear must have a backup alarm that can be heard over the surrounding noise. If surrounding noise prevents this or if there are so many vehicles using backup alarms that they can not be distinguished from each other, flashing or strobe lights are acceptable.*"

If you decide to add a strobe light, get permission from the manufacturer. 1910.178(a)(4) states that "*Modifications and additions which affect capacity and safe operation shall not be performed by the customer or user without the manufacturers prior written approval. Capacity, operation and maintenance instruction plates, tags, or decals shall be changed accordingly.*"

There are two Maritime rules 1917.43(c)(5) and 1918.65(f) that prohibit the removal or disconnection of safety devices on powered industrial trucks. As such it is possible for OSHA to cite employers under the General Duty Clause if employees are exposed to serious injury from a backing powered industrial truck.

So, before deciding what to do about backup alarms and strobe lights evaluate your work environment to ensure you implement the correct fix for your specific situation. If you're uncertain, err on the side of safety and keep them.

