



How to Improve Operational Safety: Answers to your top 5 Safety Questions

Each year, as reported by OSHA, there are nearly 100,000 forklift accident related injuries in the United States. Of these, nearly 100 result in fatalities. The two most common causes of forklift related injuries are forklift tip-over incidents or accidents involving pedestrians being struck by a forklift.

Sometimes it is not until an accident or “close call” occurs that we actually take the time to ask the questions and do the evaluations necessary to make the working environment safer for our employees. “What is our safety strategy?” “How educated are our drivers and floor workers about our safety practices?” “How safe is the working environment?” Next, a significant effort ensues to find the perfect solution to cure all of our facility’s safety ailments, when the reality is that there is no “single” solution. The good news is there are steps we can follow, rules we can implement and devices we can utilize to improve safety at our facilities. Here are some of the top questions asked by facility managers when evaluating and implementing safety programs and strategies:

How can I ensure my forklift drivers are properly trained?

While OSHA does not issue forklift driver licenses, it is the responsibility of all businesses to train, test and certify their forklift drivers. As part of the training, [OSHA](#) requires businesses to offer classroom training that covers how to safely operate a forklift, how to complete a daily safety check list and how to refuel & maintain a forklift. Testing should be given as a written and hands-on application test. Training should be tailored to fit to your operation and its specific safety hazards as well as the specific types of vehicles used.

How do I provide proper training that is engaging and fun for employees?

Proper training for employees that operate forklifts is essential to avoiding serious accidents and injuries. In addition to traditional in-class and hands on training, many companies are utilizing Forklift Safety Games during certification training and as a tool for ongoing safety training. These types of training games are designed to help reinforce safety rules surrounding forklift operation while keeping employees engaged in the learning process. Some examples of Forklift Safety Games include a software based Jeopardy type safety game, Safety Bingo, and virtual forklift simulator games. Simulator games similar to ones developed by [Etcetera Edutainment](#) and OSHA put drivers behind the wheel of a forklift and ask them to perform common forklift

tasks. The virtual environment features other forklifts, pedestrians and safety hazards that employees learn to avoid, giving drivers real experiences without “real life” hazards.

How can I make shared work space environment safe for pedestrians and forklift trucks?

Most accidents involving pedestrians and forklifts result from the rear-end swing of the forklift. In most cases, pedestrians are struck or pinned against walls or other objects which can result in serious injuries or even death. To avoid this danger, make sure all pedestrian areas are clearly marked with painted floor stripes, stop signs, and intersection warnings such as audible alarms and lights. For intersections with high traffic of pedestrians and forklift trucks, implementing an alert system that integrates with warning lights, lighted visual signs, or pedestrian safety gates can be a good safety solution. One forklift safety system utilizes infrared technology to warn pedestrians and other forklift drivers of an approaching forklift at blind corners, shared doorways, doorways that open to forklift traffic areas, racking isles or work stations. It gives pedestrians advanced warning of an approaching forklift truck to ensure they are in a safe location.

Whenever possible, forklift and pedestrian traffic should be separated into different areas. However, in some applications this is not possible, particularly for manufacturing environments. For these types of applications, a pedestrian safety system can be used to alert forklift drivers of pedestrians that are in close proximity to their forklift. Typical Pedestrian Alert Systems are enabled by a tag worn by each



pedestrian, pedestrians are immediately detected by a proximity alert sensor mounted on each forklift truck, alerting drivers to locate pedestrians in their area before proceeding. Whether in shared work spaces or busy intersections, pedestrians always have the right of way and instituting proper safety equipment and strategies to keep drivers and floor workers safe is essential to a safe and productive operation.

How can I improve visibility in my warehouse to make high traffic areas safer?

Good visibility equals fewer accidents. If forklift drivers have better visibility at intersections, blind corners, or other areas where vision is limited, accidents between forklifts and collisions with racking, facility structures and product are less likely to occur. For areas where vision is impaired, installing mirror devices can provide the visibility needed. An intersection caution system that offers audible and visual alarms as well as a 360 degree mirror for extended visibility to forklift drivers, can aid in solving areas with low visibility. For areas that house electrical equipment or access doors, installing barriers, railings, automatic bars or alarms are options for deterring forklifts from entering hazardous areas that could damage electrical equipment or lead to a forklift tip-over accident.



How can I educate my drivers what to do in a tip-over situation and what procedures should I follow should a safety incident occur?

The leading cause of injury to drivers is forklift tip-over accidents. When a forklift tips over, the greatest danger to the driver is being crushed by the overhead guard. The odds of this injury occurring are far greater if the operator attempts to jump off of the forklift. It is important to remind drivers that in the event of a tip-over accident, to remain in their seat. Remaining in the operator compartment will dramatically reduce the risk of injury during this type of accident. All forklifts should also be equipped with a seatbelt and proper safety seat to help the driver stay inside the driver compartment.

Should a tip-over or other safety incident occur, OSHA requires all incidents be verbally reported within 8 days of the occurrence. All incidents should be logged in a company safety log with information about when and where the incident occurred, who was involved, etc. This information can be gathered via employee interviews, security footage if available or by gathering data from on board impact detection devices. For example, [ImpactManager](#), from [TotalTrax, Inc.](#), is an



impact detection device that monitors and records impact data when an impact occurs. This gives managers the information they need to correct traffic related safety issues and driver performance. This data is essential for even the most minor of incidents, which when corrected, can help to reduce costs associated with damage to vehicles, product and facilities. Products like ImpactManager also have the ability to manage driver access control to insure only qualified drivers are operating each vehicle. Other models include OSHA pre-shift safety checklists that ensure all vehicles meet safety requirements before they are operated.

The key to a safer operation is preparation, education, and prevention, but the first step to improving overall safety is to review your current safety strategy to determine areas of weakness. Once these areas have been identified evaluating technologies or programs that fit your safety needs becomes a much easier and focused task. After all options have been considered, following through by implementing safety solutions or providing the education and training to your employees will put you on the road to achieving safety success for your operations.

About TotalTrax, Inc.

TotalTrax, Inc. is the leading provider of real time vehicle, driver and inventory tracking technologies for manufacturing and warehouse operations. With patented hardware, software, reporting and business intelligence tools, TotalTrax delivers substantial value in safety, fleet utilization, labor productivity and inventory accuracy to provide the insight needed to implement immediate improvements resulting in documented productivity gains.

The portfolio of TotalTrax Safety solutions ensures safety for overall operations, making warehouses more productive, more efficient, and substantially more profitable. Create a safer workplace with fewer accidents and a reduction in lost work time, claims and damage to products, facilities and vehicles with TotalTrax Safety Solutions.

To learn more about TotalTrax Safety or other Vehicle and Inventory Tracking solutions, visit us at: www.totaltraxinc.com.

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