

Case 88. 46-year-old feed room operator was crushed between a storage rack and a forklift truck.

On Wednesday, December 8, 2004, a 46-year-old feed room operator was crushed between a storage rack and a forklift truck. The decedent was the driver of the forklift truck that crushed him. He was discovered by another employee who had entered the feed room. He was pinned at chest level between a 1250 pound, 4-foot square cardboard gondola that was on the raised forks of the truck and the shelving unit in front of it. The engine of the forklift was running. Another worker, responding to the calls of the worker who had discovered the decedent, backed the forklift up to free the decedent. He indicated that the gear selector on the forklift was in the forward position and the parking brake was not set. As no one witnessed the actual incident, what happened prior to the decedent's being crushed is conjecture. It is thought that the decedent noticed something on the shelf where he meant to place the gondola and climbed from the forklift to remove it leaving the forklift running. Records indicated that the forklift was difficult to start. Apparently the forklift moved forward crushing him. He was taken to the hospital where he died three days later. The cause of death was reported as traumatic asphyxia with cerebral anoxia due to blunt impact of the chest.

MIOSHA issued the following three Serious citations to the employer:

Serious:

POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS, PART 21, RULE 2171(1).

At the start of each shift, the operator of a powered industrial truck shall perform a check of the equipment.

Not all daily checks were performed.

Serious:

POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS, PART 21, RULE 2171(2).

An employer shall ensure that any defects that would affect the safe operation of the equipment shall be repaired before use.

The starter for the forklift truck was grinding and that created a temptation to leave it running.

Serious:

POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS, PART 21, RULE 2154(1).

Provide valid operator permit for powered industrial truck operators.

There was no forklift truck training nor permits available for the drivers of two forklifts.