

Case 157. 43-year-old forklift operator was killed when the trailer he was boarding to unload pallets pulled away from the loading dock causing both the Hyster 55 forklift and the decedent to fall to the ground.

A 43-year-old male forklift operator was killed when the trailer he was boarding to unload pallets pulled away from the loading dock causing both the Hyster 55 forklift and the decedent to fall to the ground. The truck driver stated he was instructed to pull the trailer from the dock and transport it to another dock. The driver backed under the trailer and then pulled forward to ensure the truck was hooked to the trailer. He exited from the cab and let the legs up. He pulled the trailer away from the dock over the wheel chocks while the decedent was boarding it to remove pallets. The forklift was equipped with a seat belt. The forklift appeared to be about half way on the trailer when the trailer was pulled forward. As the forklift fell from the trailer to the ground, it rotated to its passenger side. The decedent, who was not wearing the seatbelt was ejected, and was pinned under the forklift's overhead guard when the forklift landed on its side. The MIOSHA compliance officer found that there were multiple methods used to assign trailer movements and no one consistent method was in place or being used.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citation to the employer at the conclusion of the investigation:

ACT 154 PA of 1974, SEC. 11(a).

Furnish to each employee employment and a place of employment, which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to the employee.

Employer failed to provide adequate procedures and training for the movement of trailers into and out of plant loading docks, whereby, exposing forklift drivers to the hazards of falling from docks and trailers being pulled out that are being boarded during loading and unloading assignments.

Among other methods, one feasible and acceptable abatement method to correct this hazard is to develop, train, and enforce a dock boarding procedure to prevent unauthorized or mis-assigned trailers being pulled away at plant truck docks.