

Case 169. 34-year-old male warehouse clerk/forklift driver at a regional warehouse and transshipment area for a supermarket and general merchandise firm was killed when a powered industrial truck (PIT) with elevated forks struck a rack and tipped over on top of him after he had jumped from the operator area of the PIT he was driving.

A 34-year-old male warehouse clerk/forklift driver at a regional warehouse and transshipment area for a supermarket and general merchandise firm was killed when a powered industrial truck (PIT) with elevated forks struck a rack and tipped over on top of him after he had jumped from the operator area of the PIT he was driving. PIT #1 refers to the PIT that fell onto the decedent. PIT #2 refers to the PIT the decedent was driving. Both operators were driving Raymond High Reach trucks with overhead protection structures. The incident occurred in an 8-foot wide, 200-foot long aisle way that ran east to west where it intersected with an entrance between two racks. The junction was approximately 20 feet from the aisle entranceway, which was 9 feet 6 inches wide. The entrance between the racks was approximately 11 feet 6 inches wide. The racks were 12 feet 7 inches tall, and were located on both sides of the aisle. The operator of PIT #1 was traveling eastbound in reverse (trailing) back to the aisle entranceway with the forks extended about 12 feet above the floor after he had deposited a pallet load. He had traveled approximately 150 feet with the forks elevated. As PIT #1 was coming down the aisle towards the entranceway, PIT #2 carrying a pallet of produce entered the aisle traveling westbound in trail mode down the aisle. The driver of PIT #1 turned towards an inter-rack tunnel with his forks still extended up and struck the lower portion of the tunnel rack. PIT #1 fell to the south as its back loader extender struck the rack. The decedent saw that PIT #1 was tipping and attempted to jump from his protected driver area to escape injury. The forks of PIT #1 landed on top of him. The operator of PIT #1 jumped to safety. Upon seeing the decedent pinned by the forks of PIT #1, the operator of PIT #1 used PIT #2 to lift PIT #1 from the decedent. A coworker heard a noise. When he arrived at the incident scene, he saw PIT #1 on top of the decedent. This employee ran to nearest emergency phone, which did not work. The coworker visited four more phones before finding one that was operational. The coworker announced on the warehouse PA system that there was an emergency in the area.

Subsequent investigation indicated that PIT #1's mast backrest was extended to at least 12 feet 8 inches above the ground. The lower elevation of the rack crossover was 12 feet 7 inches. The backrest extension was damaged and the right corner of the backrest was pushed out at least 13 inches from its designed location.

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

SERIOUS:

POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS, PART 21, RULE 2187.
Prohibit traveling with load engaging means up.

An employee was fatally injured when he was struck by the mast of a Raymond Hi-Lo that tipped over after striking the overhead rack of a tunnel system, with its forks over 12 feet above the floor.