

Case 271. 45-year-old forklift operator died of complications of being pinned between a forklift and a load of parts transported by another forklift operator.

A 45-year-old male forklift operator died of complications of being pinned between a forklift and a load of parts transported by another forklift operator. The decedent was standing at the back and next to his south-facing Toyota forklift using the engine cover as a desk. The decedent was facing south. Another forklift operator was traveling southbound, transporting his load in a forward (not trailing) position. The forklift was carrying two 4-foot by 4-foot nested dunnage racks containing parts which were spaced 1-foot-11-inches apart. The operator's vision was obstructed. The load weighed approximately 2,400 pounds. The forklift operator transporting the parts travelled forward approximately 100 feet when he felt the forklift hit something. He heard the decedent scream and then saw the decedent on the floor, with his left leg/foot pinned either under or stuck in the racks. The forklift operator lifted the rack off of the decedent's leg and then ran for help. The decedent was conscious but then became unresponsive. The decedent's coworkers provided resuscitative measures while awaiting EMS arrival. Emergency response was briefly delayed at the security guard station because the guard did not know where to direct the ambulance. EMS arrived at the scene and continued resuscitative measures while transporting the decedent to a local hospital, where he died.

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

SERIOUS: POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS, PART 21, RULE 2185:

A powered industrial truck was driven when the operator could not look in the direction of and/or keep a clear view of the direction of travel:

Driver operated Hi Lo with load obstructing vision, Yale Hi Lo #25-180.

Additionally, the Division issued the following Safety and Health Recommendations:

An inspection/investigation of your worksite revealed the following conditions(s) which may constitute a safety or health hazard to your employee(s):

- Develop and implement a program to insure that employees recognize and utilize proper parking procedures when dismounting powered industrial trucks to examine trailer loads.
- Develop and implement a procedure to allow employees to check computers and load inventories without undue exposure to powered industrial truck traffic.
- Develop and implement procedures to notify the guard house and other supervisors of medical incidents on company property so that EMS units can be properly guided to the incident without delay.