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Worker fatally crushed while unloading forklift from a trailer

In November 2017, a worker was killed when a forklift fell from the loading ramps of a flatbed trailer while it was being unloaded, crushing him.

At this stage, it appears the ramps weren't attached, pinned or tethered in any way to the trailer. They shifted while the forklift was being loaded, causing it to tip over and throwing the worker outside of the rollover protection. No seatbelt was fitted to the forklift. Investigations are continuing.

Preventing a similar incident

Mobile plant is often required to be moved from one worksite to another or to a workshop for repairs or general maintenance and servicing. This usually requires the plant to be loaded onto a truck or trailer, which introduces the risk of the plant falling while being loaded or unloaded.

A person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must assess and control the risks associated with loading and unloading mobile plant, ensuring:

- the truck/trailer is securely parked on level ground
- ramps are secured to the trailer by way of pins or other positive locking mechanism as supplied or recommended by the manufacturer
- the ramps used are load rated and suitable for the plant being loaded/unloaded
- ramps are lined up with the wheels or tracks of the plant being loaded/unloaded

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MORE INFORMATION

- [Managing risks of plant in the workplace Code of Practice 2013](#) (PDF, 1.1MB)
- [WHSQ Fact Sheet: Securing loading ramps for mobile plant](#)
- [WHSQ film: Loading and Unloading Mobile Plant](#)

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- ramps are in good condition without any bends or cracks before use
- seatbelts, where fitted, are worn whilst the plant is loaded/unloaded
- adequate exclusion zones are in place to prevent other workers being hit by the plant if it falls off the ramps.

Consideration should also be given to the condition of plant prior to loading/unloading. Where it has been determined that the plant is not safe to drive on or off a truck/trailer, alternative methods of transport should be used such as a tilt bed truck with winch attachment.

Statistics

Since 2012, 679 workers' compensation claims have been accepted for injuries caused by falling objects or moving objects, being trapped by moving or stationary objects, or vehicle accidents or rollovers associated with forklifts. Of these claims, approximately 30 per cent were from the manufacturing industry, 18 per cent from the transport, postal and warehousing industry, and 15 per cent from the wholesale trade industry.

During this period, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland was notified of 773 incidents involving forklifts. Of these, 90 involved forklift rollovers, workers being hit by forklifts or the load being carried or moved.

Ten workers have died after being hit or crushed by forklifts, three of which involved either the PCBU or their immediate family and no legal action was taken.

Prosecutions and compliance

There are currently three fatal incidents involving forklifts that are either under investigation or are being considered with a view to prosecute. All three occurred as a result of either being crushed by a forklift, or being hit by a load falling from a forklift.

In 2014, a company was fined \$35,000 after a worker was seriously injured when he fell from a forklift being loaded onto a trailer. He sustained a fractured pelvis, vertebrae damage, soft tissue and neurological injuries after welding on the modified plant failed, causing him to fall from the cabin of the forklift onto the roadway.

More information

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Support for people affected by a serious workplace incident

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