



# OPERATIONAL ALERT



Safety. Live It. Share It.

**Operational Alerts** inform Signal Mutual Members of serious incidents within the Mutual that resulted in permanent disability, death, or a significant near miss. If you have similar operations, please share this Operational Alert and have a safety discussion with operation managers, supervisors, equipment operators, and all affected employees. It is imperative that management review their operational controls at all levels to mitigate similar hazardous conditions and/or acts.

## VEHICLE, FORKLIFT & PIT INCIDENTS

### SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS

In the past five years, there have been 1,000+ forklifts, Power Industrial Trucks (PIT), and vehicle-related injuries across the Signal Mutual Membership. This does not include close calls, which are estimated to be 2 to 5 times the number of actual incidents. These incidents resulted in employee bodily harm, including shoulder, leg, ankle, foot, and back injuries. Beyond the broken bones and sprains, there have been fatalities and amputations, some of which resulted in claims exceeding \$1 million dollars. These incidents forever affect the employees, their families, and other Member employees who saw the accidents. Operations were adversely affected, and costs to the Member and the Mutual were in the millions of dollars. What makes these events more tragic is that they were preventable. Vehicles and mobile equipment such as PIT and forklifts operate in facilities on a constant basis. Whether in the warehouse, traveling between shops, on the dry dock, or along the water's edge, there are hazards that the operator and employees must be trained to recognize.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Vehicles, forklifts, and other PIT and mobile equipment, such as Rubber Tire Gantrys (RTGs) or container handlers, present unique risks since operator visibility may be limited, roadways may be congested, and employee walking paths may place them in a position of risk if not paying attention. Vehicle and mobile equipment safety means making all employees, not just the operators, aware of these hazards.

#### Member/CEO/Leader considerations:

- Specifically track mobile equipment and vehicle incidents, both near misses and actual incidents and assure corrective actions are taken.
- Consider adding lights to equipment roofs that shine on the ground and highlight potential impact areas around the equipment so both the driver and pedestrians can view potential equipment-people impact risks.(i.e., [Forklift Blue Arrow Safety Light | Lift Truck Supply \(lifttrucksupply.com\)](https://www.lifttrucksupply.com))

#### Frontline Supervision considerations:

- Highlight PIT and Forklift risks and safe operation expectations as part of the shift kickoff meetings.
- While walking the site throughout the day, reemphasize PIT and Forklift operators as well as employees walking/working near this equipment to remain vigilant and outside the zone; they may be hit or injured.

#### Operator considerations:

- Only trained, competent (and, where required -certified) operators are allowed to operate the equipment.
- Operators must never assume that employees are clear of the equipment swing radius. Before driving at every stop and before changing direction or turning, the operator must first conduct a 360 ° assessment to look for nearby personnel before proceeding.
- Operators must control speed to avoid hitting a person or another object.
- Operators must wear seatbelts and keep all body parts within the equipment when in operation.
- Material transported must be secured so it cannot fall off and crush anyone.
- Never drive with the forks up, never use the forklift to push other vehicles, and never pass a forklift going in the same direction, especially at blind spots, intersections, or other dangerous areas.
- Use the horn and lights to let others know when in operation.
- Most equipment is not maneuverable. It takes 22 feet for a forklift traveling at 10 mph to come to a full stop on a dry surface.
- Inspect the equipment before use, and if maintenance is not up to date, do not operate the equipment.

#### Pedestrian/other employee considerations:

- Pedestrians and employees have the right-of-way when vehicles and mobile equipment are being operated. However, any person near any moving equipment must not take for granted that the forklift/equipment operator sees them. The person walking or standing must always be aware of their surroundings and never turn their back to mobile equipment.
- Employees must not stand near, nor be distracted, near mobile equipment, especially in zones where the operator may not see them, or the swing radius of the equipment may hit them.
- Never pass under an elevated load.

Signal Safety developed a comprehensive PIT training program (PIT 360) that can be found on Signal's website or by contacting your Regional Safety Manager.