

Safety Note 178

FORKLIFT WORK PLATFORM SAFETY



According to the Bureau of Labor Statics, forklifts are the number one cause of machinery fatalities in the U.S. There are about 110,000 forklift accidents every year. One in six workplace deaths are forklift related, which is about 100 deaths per year. Elevated work platform (cage), attachments for forklifts are allowed by California workplace safety codes, but are not considered a suitable substitute for equipment designed for mobile elevated work such as scissor lifts or boom lifts.

Some forklift manufactures do not allow work cages to be used with their forklifts unless made by the manufacturer. Safety Note #160 (General Forklift Safety), Safety Note #163 (Forklift Training Requirements), Videos E-002 (Forklift Fundamentals) and E-033 (A Guide to Forklift Safety), are available from the ANR EH&S Website at <http://safety.ucanr.edu>.

Only operators authorized by the employer and trained in the safe operations of forklifts, including work platform safety, can operate them. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) must be developed for the specific equipment and available for the work being conducted with work platforms.

At UC ANR locations, a forklift work platform may be used only if the following operating rules are followed:

- The platform must meet Cal-OSHA design requirements stated in California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Section 3657 of the General Industry Safety Orders. *Due to the strict design requirements and the requirement of having a qualified Registered Professional Engineer certify the work platform, in-house fabricated platforms are not allowed.*
- The combined weight of the platform, load, and personnel is not to exceed one-half of the capacity as indicated on the nameplate of the forklift on which the platform is used.
- Platforms must be securely attached to the forklift to prevent the platform from sliding off.
- Before elevating the platform, ensure the path of the platform travel is clear of all hazards such as projections, overhead obstructions and electrical wires/equipment.
- Cones or other markings must be positioned around the forklift and platform to keep the work area clear of people.
- Lower the platform to ground level for employees to enter or exit. Climbing on the forklift or platform is not allowed as a method of entering or exiting the platform.
- Never travel with personnel on the work platform other than to make minor movements for final positioning of the platform.
- Forklifts used to elevate personnel must be equipped with a means to prevent the platform from lowering at a rate in excess of 135 feet per minute in case of a failure in the load hydraulic controls.
- The operator must remain in the control position on the forklift at all times while employees are on the elevated platform.
- The forklift must be equipped with operator overhead protection if the operator may be exposed to falling objects such as tools or equipment in use on the platform.
- The lifting mechanism must operate smoothly and personnel must be lifted and lowered smoothly.
- Personnel on the platform must stay inside the platform and cannot climb the railing or otherwise exit the platform to conduct work.

Recommended: Designate one forklift which is in the best condition for all tasks requiring a work platform. Ensure the forklift is in excellent condition including the forks. Conduct a pre-shift inspection of both the forklift and work platform. NOTE: If a serious accident occurs, Cal-OSHA will inspect the forklift, work platform, inspection forms and training records. Using a forklift for elevated work can be dangerous. Safety must come first!!