



What Would You Do? When Inadequate Training Creates an Accident

According to OSHA every year approximately 85 warehouse technicians are killed in fatal forklift accidents and nearly 35,000 are seriously injured. Forklifts are considered “powered industrial trucks” (PITs) and OSHA clearly outlines PIT training regulations. Companies are required to train drivers on each type of PIT they are assigned to operate and document training and re-certification every three years.

Harold had worked for Xpress Logistics for a little over a year and had a perfect safety record driving a forklift moving wood pallets. The firm was growing quickly as a result of the local port expanding. As a result was having a hard time hiring and training enough workers on PITs to keep pace with incoming shipments that required quick turnaround time.

Shortly after starting his shift one day Harold’s boss pulled him off the floor and told him he was going to be driving a forklift with a drum attachment. He took Harold back into the warehouse and had him sit on the new machine, pointing out controls for manipulating the clamping mechanism. He told him to watch one of his co-workers operate a similar machine and then begin moving fiber drums of small metal parts regularly ordered by a local manufacturing plant.

A few weeks after starting on the new PIT Harold had his first accident, dropping a drum which burst and sent metal pieces flying. A co-worker’s leg was severely cut by one of the metal shards and he required surgery which meant workman’s comp for the company. When the insurance company representative came to the warehouse he asked to meet with Harold separately about the incident. While waiting Harold noticed that the papers on the table stated that he had “received thorough training (on the forklift with the new drum attachment) in an area separate from other workplace activities and personnel and under direct supervision of a trainer.” It was signed by his boss and had another apparent signature scrawled with his name underneath.

Harold had to decide – should he tell the investigator that his signature had been forged and that he had not received directly-supervised, adequate training? Or should he wait and see if it came up in conversation and hope that it didn’t? He knew that doing so could mean the insurance company wouldn’t have to cover the medical costs for his co-worker leaving his company to foot the bill. What do you think Harold should do? Why?

Sources:

“Eagle-Grip™ Drum Attachments.” Easy Lift Equipment Co., Inc. Web. 9 August 2014

“Rigid Industrial Packaging: Fibre Drums.” Greif. Web. 1 August 2014.

“Powered Industrial Truck Operator Training; Final Rule.” U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA). 1998. Web. 30 July 2014.

