



Safety Bulletin

Mobile Phones: A Risky Distraction

It is common knowledge that using a mobile phone whilst driving a vehicle on Australian roads is against the law. It is considered to be a distraction to the driver and therefore deemed to be unsafe. There are currently no laws or regulations relating to mobile phone use when operating a forklift. This is perhaps somewhat surprising. The workplace presents a forklift operator with many hazards, just like the road does a vehicle driver. To navigate these hazards safely, the operator needs to be free of distractions, and mobile phones are a major one.

The key role mobile phones play in distracting forklift operators is to take their attention away from the task at hand, whether it's brief or prolonged. Workplace and warehouse environments, where forklifts commonly operate, are generally confined and high traffic areas. Forklifts are often in close proximity to pedestrians, expensive goods, and other machinery. To ensure the safe operation of forklifts and reduce the risk to others, operators' full attention is required at all times.

Mobile phones can also be distracting even when they aren't being used. Operators can lose control of their forklift when seeking to grab an unsecured item that is in danger of falling within the cab area. These items are often mobile phones; however they can also be something as trivial as a pen. The problem is that it's a reflex response and it takes at least one or both hands away from the controls.



Because it's not against the law, allowing mobile phone use whilst operating forklifts is a decision that needs to be made by management. The first thing to do is carry out a Risk Assessment to determine when and if mobile phone use is necessary at your workplace.

Operators taking or making personal calls while at the wheel should most certainly be prohibited. Where there is a legitimate reason for using the phone for work purposes, a hands-free kit or other safer communication systems should be considered.

It is strongly advised to avoid using mobile phones when operating a forklift. Just as they are to drivers on the roads, mobile phones are a risky distraction to operators of forklifts. After carrying out a Risk Assessment, it is up to management to establish rules regarding mobile phone use at the workplace and enforce them.

Information for this article was sourced from www.forkliftbriefing.co.uk. For further forklift safety information contact MLA Holdings on 131 652 or www.mlaholdings.com.au.