



Safety Bulletin

The Dangers of Workplace Complacency

Workplace complacency occurs when you've been doing something a certain way for so long without incident that you naturally assume there can never be an incident. Workers and operators develop a false sense of security and that's when things can start to go wrong. Complacency is a common and frustrating occurrence in most workplaces in some form or another and can have devastating consequences. It can become particularly dangerous when operating a forklift and working in an environment where forklifts commonly operate.

Complacency is regarded by many as safety's worst enemy. Although safety processes are always put in and we start off with the best intentions, confidence and routine inevitably set in, and that almost always leads to complacency. It is not unusual to see operators raising their load while turning their forklift or exceeding speed limits in order to meet deadlines. The pre-start checklist system is another procedure that is frequently skipped. Operators get deceived into a sense of complacency and genuinely believe that the equipment is safe to operate even when taking these shortcuts.

It's not only operators that are guilty of complacency. The above occurrences are quite common, but how often is this behaviour challenged by managers and supervisors? Until these incidents result in accidents, they go unnoticed in many workplaces, jeopardizing the safety of many employees. It is up to both operators and managers alike to battle complacency.

In regards to forklifts, WorkCover NSW states that:

- Employers are responsible for providing proper information, training and supervision.

Employees have responsibilities too. WorkCover NSW states that they must:

- Comply with reasonable instructions, training and information given to them, and follow safe work procedures to do work.



Operators need to be trained to understand the importance of forklift inspection and maintenance as well as safe and correct operation of the machinery. Managers and supervisors must provide site and equipment specific training to maintain and enhance operators' skills. As things get forgotten and bad habits and complacency form, an effective system of management and supervision needs to be in place to ensure operators receive regular familiarisation and refresher training.

The best way to fight complacency is regular reminders. Safety meetings before every shift are effective as they will allow bringing safety awareness to the forefront of everybody's mind right before they begin each and every shift.

Information for this article was sourced from www.forkliftaction.com and www.workcover.nsw.gov.au. For further forklift safety information contact MLA Holdings on 131 652 or www.mlaholdings.com.au.