

Enforcement Blitz Targets Forklift Hazards

February 2, 2010

Ministry of Labour inspectors will visit industrial workplaces during the month-long forklift enforcement held for the second year in a row.

The blitz is part of the province's [Safe At Work Ontario](#) strategy, launched in June 2008.

It will be the first time mushroom farms and greenhouses will be included in the forklift blitz. It will also be the first time inspectors blitz workplaces after hours in evenings and on weekends as well as during regular weekday hours.

Forklifts and other lifting devices are a major cause of serious injuries and deaths involving workers. The devices – commonly found in many industrial sectors in Ontario – are used to raise and lower material and objects.

At least 18 workers have died since 2003 as a result of incidents involving lift trucks, reach trucks, forklifts and tow motors, according to ministry statistics. More than 25 per cent of those deaths occurred last year, with five workers being killed between January and August 2009.

The average forklift lost-time claim resulted in 67 days lost from work between 2003 and 2007, according to [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#) statistics.

In total, there were 9,455 forklift-related incidents involving a lost-time injury between 1996 and 2008, an average of 727 incidents a year, according to the data compiled by the Occupational Health and Safety Council of Ontario.

These incidents were due to a number of factors, including:

- lifting devices striking objects during operation such as racking systems
- workers being struck by forklift trucks, other lifting equipment and improperly-secured loads; and
- lack of preventative maintenance and load capacity examinations.

Inspectors will take a “zero tolerance” approach to any contraventions found under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations.

Blitz Focus

Ontario Ministry of Labour inspectors will pay particular attention to industrial sectors where incidents most often occurred. These include:

- Retailers
- Wholesalers
- Transportation
- Automotive

- Wood and Metal Fabrication
- Food, Beverage and Tobacco
- Offices and Related Services (employment agencies that supply non-clerical labour to industrial workplaces)
- Chemical, Rubber and Plastics
- Industrial Services
- Utilities
- Mushroom Farms and Greenhouse Operations

Ministry inspectors will also target workplaces:

- Identified as being high-priority due to possible lifting devices and forklift hazards;
- Known to have highly hazardous processes and equipment;
- Where complaints have been received; and
- Where there is a poor compliance history.

Priorities

Inspectors will focus on the following key priorities:

- **Lifting Device Inspection and Maintenance:** Inspectors will check to ensure employers are maintaining equipment in good condition to prevent mechanical or operational failures, undertaking repairs as necessary and examining lifting devices to determine their load capacity. They will also check to ensure lifting devices are adequately built and equipped to ensure the safety of workers.
- **Operation of the Lifting Device by a Qualified Person:** Inspectors will check to ensure workers have the training, knowledge and experience to operate lifting devices and that forklift trainees are accompanied by a trained individual. Inspectors will review training records and question workers and their supervisors on their familiarity with the equipment being used in the workplace, procedures for working in the vicinity of lifting devices and possible hazards. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure workers operating lifting devices are up-to-date on required training.
- **Safe Work Environment:** Inspectors will check to ensure employers are taking specific reasonable precautions to protect workers who are working in the area of forklifts and lifting devices. This may require the use of protective barriers, qualified signal persons, warning signs or other safeguards. Employers should conduct a comprehensive workplace assessment of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to determine appropriate safeguards to use in their workplace.

Safe At Work Ontario

Sector- and hazard-specific inspection blitzes are an important feature of Ontario's [Safe At Work](#) strategy. There is no acceptable rate of injury in Ontario workplaces.

Safe at Work Ontario is the Ministry of Labour's workplace health and safety strategy focusing on:

- Enforcement
- Compliance and
- Partnership

Since being launched in June 2008, the province's team of more than 400 safety inspectors has made in excess of 140,000 workplace visits, issued more than 200,000 compliance orders (including more than 10,000 orders to stop dangerous work) and conducted 16 proactive [inspection blitzes](#) across all sectors.

Emily Bullock, Minister's Office, 416-326-7713
Bruce Skeaff, Communications Branch, 416-326-7405

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