

Safety Flash: Incident with property damage

Incident: A qualified and experienced operating engineer was using a rough terrain forklift (RTFL) to unload a 30-inch by 8-foot pallet from the end. The pallet contained elevator hydraulic equipment. After the operator picked the load and cleared the trailer, he began backing up and turning right. At this time the pallet fell off the end of the forks flipping over and rolled onto its side.

Possible contributing factors

- The load was not centered on the pallet.
- Poor communications between the elevator mechanic and his supervisor. The mechanic was not aware that his supervisor was on the way to unload the equipment, using the moffett forklift attached to the trailer.
- RLI was asked by the elevator mechanic to unload the equipment, as the mechanic was not qualified to operate the moffett forklift.
- RLI was unaware an elevator company supervisor was on the way to unload the equipment.
- The elevator mechanic did not inform, and the operator did not ask where the center of gravity was located
- The pallet was unloaded from the left side of the trailer due to an island in the way on the opposite side
- The pallet did not have slats across the bottom to resist the pallet pivoting off the end of the forks.
- The forks on the RTFL were standard 48 inch forks.
- The operator did not recognize the hazard of unloading a 96 inch long pallet with 48 inch forks when he was not aware of the center of gravity of the load.



Primary contributing factors

- Poor communications between the elevator mechanic and his supervisor. The mechanic was not aware that his supervisor was on his way to unload the equipment, using the moffett forklift attached to the trailer
- The operator did not recognize the hazard of unloading a 96 inch long pallet with 48 inch forks when he was not aware of the center of gravity of the load.

Possible solutions

- Stop work if you are uncertain about the load.
- When unloading materials or equipment, get information about the load, such as weight, center of gravity, etc.
- Communicate best practices about unloading operations to everyone on site.

Action plan

- RLI held a site wide safety stand-down on safe lifting and moving with forklifts
- The operator involved was retrained.
- Access for RTFL operators to weights of common materials was verified.
- Incident investigation protocol was reviewed in the weekly safety summary.

Keep improving

Your health and safety are our core value on every project. If you see a way we can support you in keeping our job sites safe, see your supervisor or contact: Jim Philo, 419/654-2043; Mark Hoffman, 419/360-9280; Rich Franklin, Michigan, 734/812-7294 or Alan Doane, Cleveland, 440/429-0639.