



A SITE SAFER

Introduction



Provided by Mentor FLT Training Ltd.

'What can we do to improve site safety?' is the kind of question we're often asked and are keen to help businesses answer. Though the specifics vary from site to site - each with its own unique hazards and risks - over 27 years in business we have definitely been able to identify some clear themes.

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Obviously, there's no magic formula but, at its simplest, there are three key areas on which the most safety savvy businesses tend to focus in order to actively promote and maintain a safe working environment: traffic routes/segregation, training and engagement.

And for good reason. Get this holistic trinity right and you can anticipate a significant – and lasting – improvement in safety on any site.

Let's start by being clear on who are the real victims. It's people on foot. Pedestrians account for 60% of the many hundreds of fork truck related accidents each year and that almost invariably means serious and life changing injuries (there's only ever one outcome when humans come into contact with several tonnes of steel).

Regrettably, the number of these accidents remains stubbornly – and depressingly – high with FLTs responsible for the great majority of workplace traffic accidents. Damningly, during a ten year period when road traffic accidents fell by 46%, FLT accidents came down by just 10%.

We can do better. We must do better. Doing so need not be costly and, what's more, improvements to the safety regime are almost certain to reduce operating costs and enhance any company's bottom line.

Traffic Routes & Segregation

Creating a clear, physical separation between employees on foot and FLTs may sound obvious but in an online Hazard Perception Test, developed by Mentor in association with the Fork Lift Truck Association and available free to BFFF members, only 50% of managers and supervisors recognised the dangers. In many ways that comes as no surprise.

From our own experience of running Managing Forklift Operations courses, it emerges that less than 50% of attendees have ever operated a truck. Worse still, 90% simply aren't aware of their legal responsibilities or the real consequences of an accident.

Training

Most companies have recognised the need for operator training and fulfil their basic obligations. However, far fewer take account of human nature and the need for constant monitoring.

Operating a fork lift is a skilled job, one that involves a high level of repetition. Unfortunately, performing the same task many hundreds of times a day can easily lead to complacency and bad practice. Why? Because people calculate risk based on what has (or hasn't) happened previously, even when they know they shouldn't.

Because "nothing bad happened when I did that before" people relax and their performance levels plummet. As road users, how many of us can claim to be blame-free? The difference is that on the highway we are held to account – by cameras, the police... but especially by our peers.



It makes sense, therefore, for every single employee on site to receive a short, sharp and thought provoking training course of the dangers posed by FLT's... and how to avoid them. Our own "Safely Working with Lift Trucks" course has proved to be exceptionally effective in delivering high impact, low-cost training that both informs the unaware and refocuses the experienced who have fallen into bad habits.

Engagement

As mentioned a little earlier, peer group pressure is immensely powerful so one of the most important steps to reducing accidents is creating a positive safety culture... a shared belief about risk, hazards and accidents. The aim: to establish a self-policing environment where bad practice is simply not tolerated by the community (like smoking in a restaurant).

It starts with buy-in from the top. Senior management must recognise the benefits and have the commitment to demonstrate that the safety culture is genuine... and involves everyone. Employees need to be engaged and involved in an open and meaningful way, not least because they are most likely have the solutions to any challenges. By making them part of the process and the solution you will have their all-important buy in.

Finally, sustain the commitment. Working safe and staying safe needs to be part of every shift, day to day, year upon year, to avoid the threat of complacency.

To find out more about how you can improve your site safety, contact Mentor on 01246 555222 or visit www.mentortraining.co.uk



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