

SAFETY ALERT

Seatbelt saves forklift driver

INCIDENT

A driver lost control of a forklift while driving downhill on a long, straight quarry road. The forklift rolled over and came to rest in an adjacent drain. The driver received bruising to his foot.

CIRCUMSTANCES

After delivering spare parts to the processing plant the driver was returning to the workshop unladen when he lost control of the forklift and rolled over in an adjacent drain.



INVESTIGATION

Investigations indicated that the driver was wearing a seatbelt. It's believed that the seatbelt prevented the driver from being crushed which could have resulted in serious injury or a fatality.

The investigation highlighted speed and uneven road surface as contributing factors. The speed limit for all vehicles on this road was 30 kph. The forklift did not have a speedometer so the driver did not know the speed at the time of the incident. Forklifts commonly have a top speed of around 25-30 kph. The road prior to where the forklift came to rest had a downward grade and slight undulation which were also contributing factors.

The driver reported the forklift started to wobble from side to side which resulted in him losing control.

It should be noted that most tip-over incidents involve unloaded forklifts. Unladen forklifts are more unstable than a loaded forklift with the load carried low.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider lower speed limits for forklifts in comparison to other vehicles.
- Forklift operators must know the limitations of the machines they drive including appropriate speeds for all kinds of road surfaces.
- Consider fitting speed limiting devices to forklifts. This is a reasonable control when considering the hierarchy of controls according to legislation.
- Ensure roads travelled by forklifts are well formed and clearly marked.
- Ensure all quarry roads accessed by mobile plant have a windrow at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the height of the largest wheel that accesses the road.
- Ensure seatbelts are correctly fitted and worn. Consider installing intelligent systems so the forklift can only be started if the seatbelt is fastened.

Please also refer to the department's previous safety alert *SA00/03 - Operator crushed by overturned forklift*. Safety alerts can be found on the department's website at www.resources.nsw.gov.au/safety/safety-alerts

NOTE: Please ensure all relevant people in your organisation receive a copy of this Safety Alert, and are informed of its content and recommendations. This Safety Alert should be processed in a systematic manner through the mine's information and communication process. It should also be placed on the mine's notice board.

Signed



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