

LESSONS LEARNED

Forklift Rollover

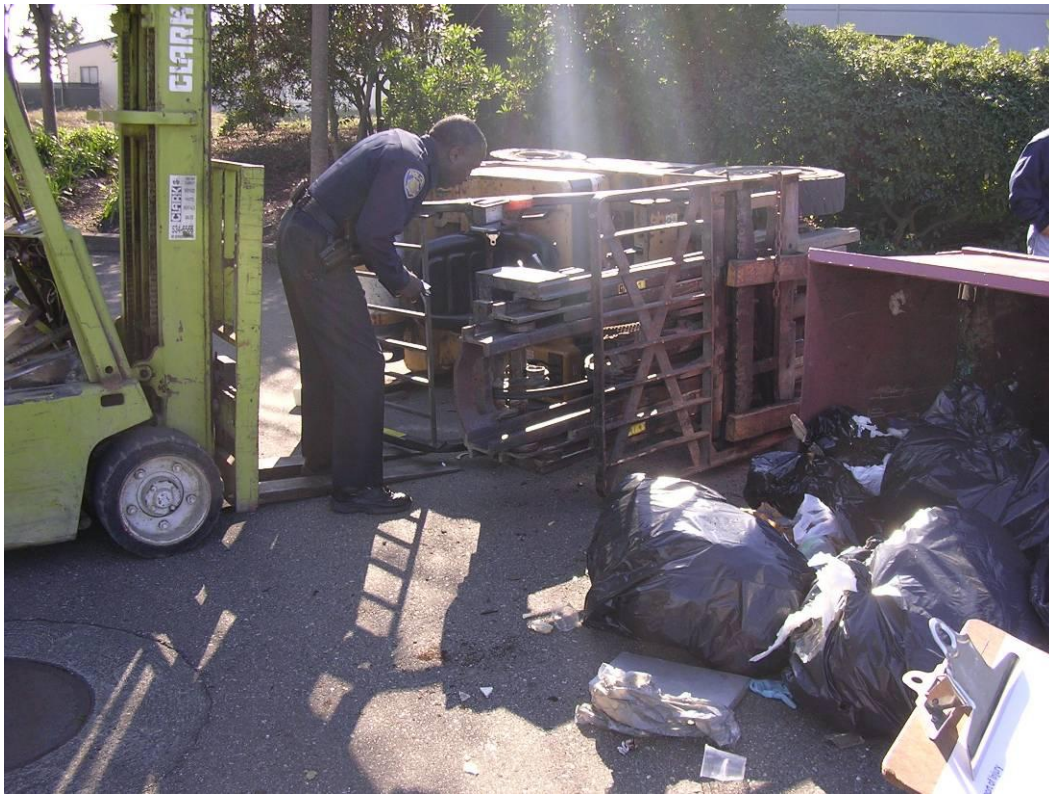
University of California, Berkeley

What Happened?

A veteran forklift operator with 20 years experience started his day just as he had often done, then soon realized just how fast things can change. Due to an oversized load, the operator was transporting a dumpster bin on the forks of his forklift while he was traveling in reverse. While in reverse, he hit a curb, causing the forklift to roll over onto its side.

The stunned operator was transported by ambulance to the hospital emergency room, where he was treated for a fractured leg.

The operator understood the importance of wearing a seat belt and holding-on to brace for a fall. This awareness may have made the difference between a fractured leg, and an even more significant injury.





What were the Contributing Factors?

While driving in reverse, the operator was unaware of his surroundings and did not allow sufficient clearance between the forklift and other obstructions (such as the curb). Operators on a forklift of this type are seated to the left side of the forklift because of the placement of the controls. This layout makes it more comfortable to hold on to the Roll Over Protection System (ROPS) with the right hand and look over the right shoulder while driving in reverse. This position, however, limits the user from fully knowing what potential dangers (like a curb) may lay to the left side of the lift.

What Corrective Action was Taken?

This operator had been trained several times throughout his years on campus and was known to be an experienced operator and in compliance with all Cal/OSHA requirements. The operator will be retrained, and all operators will be reminded to be continuously alert and aware of their surroundings.

How can incidents like this be prevented?

- Be aware of your surroundings. Check and recheck often.
- Let other forklift operators know the lessons learned from this and other incidents through open communication with their own department or other departments at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley).
- Co-workers who observe any near misses should report those incidences to the forklift operator and to their supervisor. The intention of reporting these incidences is not that the operator had the near miss and needs to be reprimanded, but that sharing experience and information may help prevent accidents before they happen.

Resources

EH&S Forklift Program Page
<http://ehs.berkeley.edu/healthsafety/forklift.html>

Forklift Operating Rules:
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/3664.html>
Operator Training Requirements:
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/3668.html>