

## Safe Equipment Operation

A large majority of municipal operations have departments where heavy equipment is being operated by staff. All heavy equipment requires trained personnel to operate them safely and contribute to an injury-free workplace.

Recent events have resulted in tragic outcomes for highway and public works environments. Earlier this year, a forklift operator was killed when he was pinned between the rear of the forklift and a metal rack he was working on. The cause of the loss was the forklift being driven by an untrained worker who was unfamiliar with the safe operations of the forklift. This example emphasizes the requirement to have staff be properly trained.

Another recent example resulting in a tragic loss of life, a truck driver/equipment operator was loading an excavator onto a low-boy trailer when the excavator slipped off the side of the trailer, crushing the operator as he was ejected from the seat. The cause of this incident included the operator's apparent ejection from the excavator onto the ground where the excavator rolled over. The operator was not wearing a seatbelt while moving the excavator and there was no spotter to assist with the loading process.

Unfortunately, there are other examples of equipment operators being injured or killed in the workplace around heavy equipment. Accidents like these include roll-over events, striking loader buckets, falling debris, etc. The key to reducing or eliminating such injuries is training on the safe operation of the equipment and using situational awareness. Only properly trained and knowledgeable staff should be permitted to operate heavy equipment such as loaders, excavators, forklifts, graders, rollers, and others. When untrained staff attempt to maneuver these large and powerful machines, workplace injuries are likely to result.

The causes of loss for most incidents involving heavy equipment are related to untrained or inexperienced operators. Proper training on equipment will educate workers, help prevent future incidents, and provide situational awareness.

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