

# Forklift Battery Use and Maintenance Fatality File



## After Nearly-Fatal Forklift Accident, Nebraska Teen Gets Back to Work

For Cole Buckley, of Arlington, Neb., the everyday job routine of ensuring warehouse efficiency and warehouse organization became deadly.

According to the Arlington Citizen, Buckley, 19, had been operating a forklift at his job at Midwest Manufacturing in Valley early in the morning on August 12 when an incident occurred that almost took his life.

“Someone had trouble closing the rail car door and they asked me if I could help do it,” Buckley told the Arlington Citizen. “I told them I’d go do it and apparently I had trouble, too. I went down and grabbed an extra strap that we had and I hooked it up to the forklift and the rail car door handle. When I pulled back, the handle broke off and hit me in the chest.”

When the handle broke off, it hit Buckley in the chest, collapsing his lung and rendering him unconscious. When his lung collapsed, Buckley vomited – and the vomit landed on the forklift’s battery.

“When the vomit hit the battery, it made it smoke and combust and spark, which gave me the burns on my arms,” Buckley said.

After coworkers discovered Buckley, who hadn’t responded to radio calls, an airlift brought him to a hospital in Omaha, the Arlington Citizen reports. He spent four days there, and then stayed with his parents for another week after that.

Working in a warehouse is a hazardous job to have, especially when one works around forklifts or performs regular forklift battery maintenance. One in four workplace transport accidents involves a forklift. Because of this, it’s always necessary to observe the correct forklift battery safety and forklift battery handling procedures to ensure personnel well-being and to keep equipment in good repair.

Typical forklift and forklift battery safety procedures include wearing protective gear, observing caution when driving a forklift and operating the correct equipment for handling a forklift battery.

Now, Buckley has returned to his job with limited restrictions on his movement. Mostly, he’s just glad to be alive, the Arlington Citizen reports.

“It makes me take a step back and realize how short life really is,” Buckley said. “I

mean, I try to go through every day thinking about that – about how I could have died – and it is scary.”