

Learning from Close Calls Fatality File



A forklift driver backed into a storage rack, pushing the rack into the aisle on the other side. This close call went unreported. Then a material handler who was unable to see over his load collided with the rack in the aisle while taking the load to a storage area. Since no one else saw the incident and it had apparently caused no damage, the material handler neglected to report the incident. What he didn't realize was that the collision had punctured a container of lubricating fluid in one of the boxes on the storage rack.

By the time the next shift had arrived, the fluid had formed a puddle in the aisle way. An employee hurrying through the area walked right into the spill but managed to keep his balance. Assuming it was not his job to clean up the spill or report it, he left it as it was. Then a forklift operator, traveling too fast, swerved to avoid the rack and ran through the spilled lubricant. Sliding on the slippery floor, the forklift narrowly missed a group of workers. Fortunately, this close call, which could have easily caused a fatality, was reported and an investigation was started.

Results Of The Investigation

The near miss investigation revealed several contributing factors:

- Backing without checking behind the forklift contributed to the first forklift hitting the rack.
- Exceeding safe operating speed contributed to the second forklift swerving around the rack and into the fluid.
- Traveling with an obstructed view contributed to the collision between the pallet jack and the storage rack.
- Not paying attention and being in a hurry contributed to a near slip and fall.
- Not reporting any of the three smaller incidents contributed to an escalation of hazards that resulted in the final incident.
- Had all of these incidents been reported, the problems could have been corrected before they could contribute to other incidents.