

OSHA Forklift Seatbelt Regulations



Requirements

OSHA does not have a specific rule requiring forklifts to have seat belts. However, employers are required to protect employees from "serious and recognized hazards." All powered industrial trucks manufactured after 1992 are required by OSHA to have seat belts or another type of restraint specifically to reduce the risk of being crushed, or "mousetrapped," in the event that the forklift overturns. Mousetrapping is a recognized and serious hazard, and OSHA would enforce the need to have seat belts on forklifts under this rule.

Retrofitting

If a forklift does not have a seat belt, OSHA can mandate installation of one. This requires the employer to be notified by the forklift manufacturer that mousetrapping hazard exists and that a retrofitting program has been initiated. If the employer does not take advantage of the retrofitting program, once it knows it exists, OSHA can cite the company for failure to comply.

Wearing Seat Belts

OSHA requires that operators use seat belts when they are furnished. Employers are responsible for ensuring that forklift operators are wearing their seat belts. If the operator does not use seat belts, the employer could be cited for failure to comply with OSHA standards which requires companies to protect employees from recognized hazards.

Penalties and Compliance

An OSHA compliance officer who observes a forklift operator not using a seat belt can issue a citation to the employer for failing to comply with OSHA regulations. Before issuing the citation, the compliance officer is required to check with the manufacturer of the forklift to make sure that the machine either was manufactured with a seat belt or that a retrofit kit had been made available to the employer. If the forklift has a seat belt, or if there is a retrofit kit available, the officer will issue a citation. The employer also may have to pay a penalty to OSHA. The amount of the penalty depends on the degree of danger and whether the employer had previous citations