



DECEMBER 22 — Suspended Load Hazard

Was using a forklift for a sawhorse. Forks were elevated without anyone in the cab.

The employee was asked to put the beam on a set of sawhorses so the cut could be made to the beam safely.

A forklift was discovered **left unattended with the forks raised**, being used as a makeshift work platform. **Normalization of deviance** made this feel “normal.” **Change blindness** hid the danger sitting in plain sight.

Forks up high with no one near,
Turns simple work to sudden fear.
Drop them down before you roam
A grounded fork keeps the danger home

Raised forks are unstable, unpredictable, and absolutely forbidden when a forklift is unattended.

OSHA requires:

Forks down, controls neutralized, brakes set, power off.

This setup failed all four.

Using raised forks as a work platform is like resting your truck on a shaky pallet instead of jack stands — it looks stable right until the moment it collapses.

Hazards

- Sudden fork drop
- Struck-by injuries
- Hydraulic drift
- Forklift movement
- OSHA PIT violation

Stats

- Forklifts injure **85 workers/day**
- Hydraulic drift occurs in **~50%** of older forklifts
- Suspended loads cause **50+ fatalities/year**

Words of Wisdom

- Raised forks must NEVER be left unattended.
- Forks aren't shelves. Get them on the ground.

Pause and Think

Social confirmation drift happens when we base safety on the reactions of others instead of the actual hazard. When everyone walks past a dangerous setup without speaking up, the brain automatically lowers its concern. It assumes, “If it were truly unsafe, someone would’ve said something.”

This creates a false sense of security — the hazard stays the same, but our awareness quietly collapses. The more familiar the unsafe condition becomes, the harder it is to recognize the danger staring us in the face.

- “Why do makeshift setups feel ‘good enough’?”
- “What’s the proper shutdown sequence?”
- “Where have YOU seen hydraulic drift?”