



July 13 — Communication Is Only Effective When It's Understood

When unloading the trailer, forklift driver was creeping up to the trailer and there were no signals or motions to stop and punctured into the tire. Signal guy said he said, "Stop." But operator did not hear it.	Safety stand down about complacency & correct people signaling the operators.
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Good communication isn't just about giving directions...

It's about making sure they're understood.

During a forklift operation, a spotter was directing the operator while unloading a trailer. At some point, the operator misunderstood the hand signals being given and continued moving in the wrong direction, puncturing the trailer tire.

Fortunately, no one was injured, but the outcome could have been much worse if employees had been standing nearby or if the load had shifted unexpectedly.

We often assume that because we're talking—or signaling—everyone understands the message. In reality, communication is a two-way process. If there is uncertainty, confusion, or even a brief hesitation, it's time to stop and clarify before moving equipment.

The safest crews don't guess what someone means. They stop, ask questions, and make sure everyone is on the same page before continuing.

Hazards

- Miscommunication
- Mobile equipment incidents
- Struck by hazards
- Property damage
- Assumptions during critical tasks

Words of Wisdom

Communication isn't successful because words or signals were given—it's successful when everyone understands the same message. When in doubt, stop and clarify before moving.

Pause and Think

- Have you ever misunderstood directions during a task?
- What should an operator do if a hand signal isn't clear?
- How can spotters and operators confirm they understand each other before moving equipment?
- Why is it important to stop work instead of guessing what someone meant?
- Besides forklifts, where else is clear communication critical to working safely?

Closing Thought

A few seconds spent confirming a message can prevent an incident that lasts a lifetime. Never assume—communicate, confirm, and then continue.

See Something • Say Something • Do Something