



SHARP START



April 20 — Sitting on Safety

Employee was driving fork truck with seatbelt under him instead of on.	Told him he needed to put it on, and he did.
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An employee was operating a forklift with the seatbelt sitting underneath him instead of being worn.

The machine was running. The work was getting done. Nothing seemed wrong.

But seatbelts aren't there for normal operation. They're there for when things don't go as planned.

Forklifts can shift, tip, or react quickly — especially when turning, carrying loads, or traveling across uneven surfaces. When that happens, the operator doesn't have time to think through a response.

Without a seatbelt, the natural reaction is to brace, jump, or get thrown from the seat.

And that's where injuries turn serious.

The operator zone is designed to protect you — but only if you stay inside it.

The equipment didn't change. The task didn't change.

Only the level of protection did.

This wasn't about not knowing the rule. It was about treating it like it didn't matter this time.

Hazards

- Ejection from forklift
- Crushing injuries during tip-over
- Loss of operator control
- Impact injuries
- Equipment instability
- Line of fire exposure to motion energy

Stats

- Forklift incidents cause thousands of injuries each year
- Tip-overs are a leading cause of serious forklift injuries
- Seatbelt use significantly reduces risk of fatal injury
- Many incidents occur during routine operations when operators feel in control

Words of Wisdom

- If you're sitting on it, it's not protecting you
- Worn wrong = not worn at all
- Control doesn't replace protection

Pause and Think

When a task feels routine, it's easy to rely on experience instead of protection. You've driven equipment before. You know how it handles. It feels like something you can manage. That's when small steps get skipped.

Not because they're unknown but because they don't feel necessary in the moment. But when something changes a shift, a bump, a sudden movement there's no time to go back and fix it.

And in those moments, protection matters more than experience.

- Am I wearing my seatbelt every time I operate equipment?
- Do I rely on experience instead of protection?
- Am I skipping steps that don't feel important in the moment?
- Would I correct someone else doing the same thing?