



## Forklift Safety Alert

### OSHA Interpretation on Lifting Techniques

A general industry letter of interpretation has been referenced in a citation against a contractor working in the construction industry.

In October 1999, Richard Fairfax, Director of Compliance Programs for OSHA issued an interpretation that using “free rigging” to make a below the tines lift with a forklift is a violation of OSHA standards. This practice is officially an OSHA violation because it affects the capacity and safe operation of the forklift.

Directly from the letter of interpretation dated October 22, 1999:

“Free rigging is the direct attachment to or placement of rigging equipment (slings, shackles, rings, etc.) onto the tines of a powered industrial truck for a below-the-tines lift. This type of lift does not use an approved lifting attachment.

Although free rigging is a common practice, it could affect the capacity and safe operation of a powered industrial truck. 29CFR1910.178(a)(4) requires that modifications and additions which affect the capacity and safe operation shall not be performed by the customer or user without manufacturer’s prior written consent.”

This letter of interpretation was referenced in a citation issued by OSHA in California when a construction worker was killed on site. The worker was pinned between a forklift and an 8 ½ ton generator they were trying to load on the bed of a truck when the harness slipped down the raised arms of the forklift. The corner of the generator swung towards the forklift pinning the worker against the left front tire of the forklift. OSHA referenced the interpretation letter above as well as the adequacy of the training that the worker received, in issuing the citations.

#### Summary:

A forklift must be used as a forklift and not as a crane. Free rigging presents a hazard to the health of our employees and should not be allowed in any circumstance.

