

Company's tailored IOSH *Managing safely* course aims to reduce forklift truck accidents

IOSH believes that 70 per cent of workplace incidents, like a forklift truck accident, are preventable by good management. Training provider Mentor Performance & Risk Management Ltd agrees, emphasising that simple management techniques can help reduce accidents, avoid injuries and save lives.

This message has already been taken on board by 1,800 delegates who have completed Mentor's *Managing safely* – Forklift Operations course in the last year. Mentor director Stuart Taylor says, "Forklifts are the biggest single cause of injury in workplace transport. We're finding around half of the supervisors we train have never driven a forklift truck, so teaching them about good and bad practices is very good for them. It is very important that supervisors recognise that forklift truck operating is a skilled job, but it is also a repetitive job. Drivers carry out the same tasks thousands of times and can start to think that things can't go wrong, but they can and when they do the results can be horrific. There are not many minor injuries in forklift truck accidents. You will have enormous injuries that affect the victim for the rest of their life. They have a big effect on the workforce too."

Mentor's course was established in 2013 around the same time as the Health and Safety Executive published a new Approved Code of Practice for lift trucks, which specifically mentions management and supervisor training. The IOSH-accredited course uses IOSH's *Managing safely* as its basis but also contains additional information, which specifically covers the safe management of forklift operations. This information covers law relating to forklift trucks, the importance of managing forklift operations, the real cost of a forklift accident and what can be done to ensure safety.

The course has attracted clients from all industries, including BAE Systems, Nestlé and McVitie's. Stuart adds that as well as improving working conditions for employees, safe forklift operations can also directly improve bottom-line profits.

"The real cost of an accident, including the consequential cost to repairing damage to infrastructure and lost working

time, can be anything between five and 20 times the cost of the recorded damage to a forklift," he says.

"Take a pallet of coffee. It can cost between £6,000 and £8,000. Some pallet loads, such as spirits, cost the same as a family car. It's not just stock damage, it's the clean-up of the damage. You have to replenish the stock, and while the dropped pallet is in the aisle that causes a knock-on effect to others wanting to access it."

"One big customer we work with, they have five sites and have an acceptable stock damage of £80,000 per period, per warehouse. There is no emphasis on reducing it. What we are doing is helping people to recognise where they can make slight adjustments to improve safety and make a difference to their bottom line."

Chris Pinder, Learning and Development Co-ordinator at United Biscuits, comments: "In the past year, we have had four of our team managers, who are responsible for supervising forklift operations, attend the course. Their feedback is that they feel empowered by their knowledge regarding forklift-trained staff and the tasks they perform. This training has given them confidence to approach behavioural safety discussions with truck operators to increase safety awareness. As a direct result of this emphasis on safety from management, we have seen a rise in near-miss reporting with regard to forklift operations."

For more details on IOSH's *Managing safely* course, call +44 (0)116 257 3192.

