



## ACCIDENT/INCIDENT ALERT

No. 4, September 2005

# Forklift Operator Fatality

## INCIDENT

A forklift operator received fatal injuries when the forklift he was operating overturned on a ramp he was descending.

## CIRCUMSTANCES

A passer-by discovered the 1-tonne-capacity forklift overturned on a ramp, which exited from the building onto a roadway. The operator was found trapped between the frame of the forklift and the ground.

## INVESTIGATION

The investigation found that:

- The forklift operator was not trained to operate a forklift but had operated them before under supervision.
- The forklift was an obsolete model in poor mechanical condition i.e. the tyres were of unequal pressure, the steering linkages were severely worn, and the brakes were ineffective.
- The forklift had not been left in an inoperable condition.
- The forklift appears to have been turning while descending the ramp.
- The forklift was used without the employer's knowledge.
- At the time of the accident the forklift was not being used in its intended semi-static situation inside the workshop to lift items in and out of a hydraulic press.



Forklift as it came to rest after the accident

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain forklifts to NZS B56 and NZS 2359 as a minimum.
- Only trained and authorised operators are legally permitted to use a forklift. Employers should implement strict guidelines for forklift usage in accordance with the *Approved Code of Practice for Training Operators and Instructors of Powered Industrial Lift Trucks (Forklifts)*. All operators are required to be trained to the minimum standard presented in the code.
- This accident highlights the hazard of staff working alone and the importance of training and supervision.
- Check the environment in which a forklift is to be used for hazards such as ground surface conditions, potholes and slopes etc. before beginning.

**Never turn a forklift on a slope.**