

Investigation Process

What triggers an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Division?

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of an employee, an amputation or the loss of an eye.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

How is the NCDOL OSH Division notified?

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of any work-related fatality. In-patient hospitalizations of one or more employees, any work-related amputation, and any work-related loss of an eye must be reported within 24 hours.

What will the investigation focus on?

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

What will happen during the investigation?

- An OSH investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

How long will the investigation take?

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

When are investigation results disclosed?

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



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The Investigation

OSH investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Aisles were designated as travel paths for forklifts.
- Vehicles were operated at a safe speed.
- Only authorized personnel operated and maintained forklifts.
- Employees avoided standing under raised forks.
- Dockboard and trailer were secured while loading and unloading.
- Operators were trained in safe vehicle operation.
- Vehicles were parked with the forks lowered and brakes set.
- Carbon monoxide produced by forklifts was monitored.
- Operators wore seat belts while operating a forklift.

Standards: 29 CFR 1910.178, Powered Industrial Trucks
Industry Type: General Industry
Accident Type: Powered industrial truck accident
Statistical Data: Seven workplace deaths in calendar years 2019 and 2020 involved forklifts.

What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent forklift accidents?

Free training: Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

Publications: An industry guide that discusses forklift operator training and the safe operation of powered industrial trucks.