

U.S. Department of Labor

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Washington, D.C. 20210



March 7, 1996

Mr. Robert B. Walker, CSP
Director - Health, Safety and
Industrial Hygiene
Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc.
P.O. Box 1408900
Nashville, TN 37214-8900

Dear Mr. Walker:

Thank you for your letter dated January 29, addressed to Mr. Thomas H. Seymour, Deputy Director for Safety Standards Programs, requesting clarification of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) policy regarding the use of seat belts on powered industrial trucks. Your letter was transferred to the Directorate of Compliance Programs for response. I apologize for the delay in responding to your request. The questions you asked and the corresponding responses follow.

Question 1: Are seat belts required to be installed on forklift trucks? If so, under what standard and section is this addressed?

Response: OSHA does not have a specific standard that requires the use or installation of seat belts, however, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) requires employers to protect employees from serious and recognized hazards. Recognition of the hazard of powered industrial truck tipover and the need for the use of an operator restraint system is evidenced by certain requirements for powered industrial trucks at ASME B56.1-1993 - Safety Standard for Low Lift and High Lift Trucks. National consensus standard ASME B56.1-1993 requires that powered industrial trucks manufactured after 1992 must have a restraint device, system, or enclosure that is intended to assist the operator in reducing the risk of entrapment of the operator's head and/or torso between the truck and ground in the event of a tipover. Therefore, OSHA would enforce this standard under Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act.

Question 2: Is it required for new forklift trucks to have seat belts. If so, under what standard and section is this addressed?

Response: See response to question #1.

Question 3: Is it required for forklift trucks already in use (that do not have seat belts) to be retrofitted for seat belts? If so, under what standard and section is this addressed?

Response: Please be advised that when an employer has been notified by a powered industrial truck manufacturer or association of the hazard of lift truck overturn and made aware of an operator restraint system retrofit program, then OSHA may cite Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act if the employer has not taken advantage of the program. Other employers who have powered industrial trucks that are not equipped with operator restraint systems should strongly consider contacting the appropriate powered industrial truck manufacturer for advice on obtaining and installing such devices for the prevention of an accident or injury from a lift truck overturn hazard.

Question 4: If seat belts are installed on forklift trucks, is it required for the seat belts to be worn? If so, under what standard and section is this addressed?

Response: National consensus standard ASME B56.1-1993 requires that use of an operator restraint system when equipped on a powered industrial truck. Therefore, OSHA would enforce the use of such a device under Section 5(a)(1) of the OSH Act.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact [the Office of General Industry Compliance Assistance at (202) 693-1850].

Sincerely,

John B. Miles, Jr.
Director
Directorate of Compliance Programs