

Critical to address the risks from forklifts

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There have been seven workplace fatalities involving moving machinery - such as forklifts - since the start of May, and WorkSafe New Zealand Chief Executive Nicole Rosie says she's devastated for the families, colleagues and communities of these workers.

"I offer my heartfelt sympathies to everyone touched by these deaths," she says.

During this period, one worker was fatally injured in an incident involving a forklift, and in the last eight weeks, WorkSafe has been notified of 16 other serious incidents involving these machines.

"Forklifts are a known risk – they've been killing and maiming people for many years, yet there is little evidence the risk they pose is being identified, let alone appropriately managed," she says.

"Any business using forklifts should have them high on their critical risk list, put appropriate controls in place and monitor them for effectiveness," she said.

"It is not good enough to put some lines of paint on the ground and leave it at that. Businesses must check that their controls are working."

"It's important to involve workers in the risk analysis as they're the ones who most often identify these risks before they cause a serious injury or a death."

This issue is neither new nor unique to New Zealand, as recent data on critical risks from Australia and the USA points to issues around mobile plant as significant injury creators.

Issues that WorkSafe inspectors are finding during site visits include:

- **no exclusion of workers from areas where forklifts are operating**
- **a lack of operator training**
- **loads obstructing the vision of the operator**
- **unstable loads and slippery loads falling off**
- **poor maintenance.**