

Media Statement

Issue Date: - Thursday, 13 September 2007

Company fined \$8000 over forklift drivers.

An O'Connor warehousing and distribution business has been fined a total of \$8000 for failing to ensure it had evidence that forklift drivers were competent to operate the vehicles.

Independent Container Depot Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Fremantle Magistrates Court this week of failing to ensure that two employees had documentary evidence of their competency to operate forklifts. The company was fined \$5000 on one charge and \$3000 on the other.

A WorkSafe inspector visited the company in August 2005 to investigate the injury of an employee who had been struck by a 5-tonne forklift.

In the course of the investigation, the inspector discovered that two employees of the company had been operating forklifts for a significant amount of time, and neither had documentary evidence that they were competent to operate forklifts as required by WA's Occupational Safety and Health Regulations.

The inspector issued an improvement notice directing that only employees who could prove that they had undertaken the appropriate training were permitted to operate forklifts.

A subsequent visit by the inspector two weeks later revealed that, although the employer had agreed to comply with the notice, the two employees had continued to operate forklifts without the required documentary evidence of competency.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that adequate and relevant training in the operation of mobile plant such as forklifts was essential in providing a safe workplace.

"Forklift operation is considered to be hazardous enough to be classified as 'high-risk work'," Ms Lyhne said.

"In fact forklift operation is viewed sufficiently seriously that as of next month, forklift operators will be required to hold a national licence under a new National Licensing Standard.

"At the moment, anyone who operates a forklift is required to hold documentary evidence that they have met the competency requirements identified in the National Guidelines.

"This can be in the form of a non-compulsory WorkSafe Certificate of Competency, a Statement of Attainment issued by a TAFE college or training organisation or an in-house company certificate that acknowledges adequate training and experience.

"But this situation will change as from October 1, after which current forklift operators in WA will be required to convert to a national licence by prescribed deadlines, and new operators will need to acquire the national licence straight away.

“The operation of forklifts is considered to be high-risk work, and we view adequate and appropriate training of employees as absolutely essential to the safety of everyone in the workplace.

“This court case should be viewed as a reminder to employers that action will be taken against employers who do not adequately train workers to operate hazardous machines and who do not comply appropriately and quickly with the notices issued against them.”

Further information on the National Standard for Licensing Persons Performing High Risk Work can be obtained by telephoning WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or on the website at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au.

Asset Information

Asset: 31911 (Company fined over forklift drivers)

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