



Unless You Have a Capital “S” On Your Chest ...

The sole purpose of seatbelt use on a forklift is not for front-end collisions. The number one cause of counterbalanced forklift operators going to the morgue instead of home to supper with their families is tip-over accidents. On average **100 people lose their lives each year** working on, or around forklifts, and almost half of those casualties are tip-over accidents. Engineering, accident statistics, eye-witness, and first-hand accounts tell us that if an operator stays inside the overhead guard area in their seat of the truck, their chances of survival (or at least reducing the severity of injury) increase.

The seat belt is first and foremost designed to keep you in the seat in case of tip-over. Normal human behavior says JUMP when the lift truck starts to tip. In that split second needed to make a decision, two things motivate you in the wrong direction. First, momentum is throwing you to the low side of the machine (direction of tip). Secondly, in your mind, ground means safety, and the ground is closest on the low side (direction of tip). The problem is you can't get away from the machine fast enough, and the overhead guard grabs you at the head, neck, shoulders, or chest, and crushes you.

Furthermore, you need to keep your hands and feet inside the confines of the truck and overhead guard. We humans have another peculiar habit; as the machine tips, we stick our arms and legs out toward the direction of the tip as if to somehow magically stop the 9,000 lbs of forklift from tipping over - doesn't work unless you are Superman and have a big capital S on your chest.

Unless you are Superman, you need to do the following things to survive a tip-over accident:

- 1) Put on the seat belt every time you operate a truck. Adjust the seatbelt as needed.
- 2) Push hard against the steering wheel and brace your feet firmly into the floorboard on the machine, which will firmly plant your bottom end in the seat.
- 3) Place both your hands on the steering wheel, lean forward, and use the steering wheel as upper body support.
- 4) **Always** lean away from the point of impact. For example, if I'm tipping left, I lean right.

Be a Superman or Superwoman to your family! Remember these tips, and make it home every single day after work.

-- Tony Jones, Corporate Safety Trainer