

Who Will Conduct Your Forklift Safety Training?

By

Kenneth W. Hutchins

This is a topic that is very important to me personally.

O.S.H.A., in the 1999 changes to 29 CFR 1910.178 stated that forklift training must be site and equipment specific. Yet, we still see companies that tell their clients to send their employees to a remote location for training.

O.S.H.A. states that the employees must be evaluated on the equipment they would normally use and under the conditions they would normally operate under. Yet, we still see companies provide no evaluation or they have employees drive unfamiliar equipment around a mock obstacle course at their location.

We see companies advertise their consultants as, **OSHA Certified**. No such thing exists. O.S.H.A. does not certify instructors, consultants, or trainers.

Who is conducting the training?

The problem simply stated is that O.S.H.A. does not certify safety instructors. In the normal course of the business day we see training courses being taught by insurance agents, forklift salesmen, and even forklift mechanics.

If you were to question these individuals as to their knowledge or background, you will find in most cases, that there is little knowledge or background in this field.

I have had business owners tell me, "But they provide the training for free", because I am their customer.

Nothing is free.

If one of your employees was involved in an accident, and had filed suit against your company, imagine this person testifying on your behalf.

Employee's Attorney: "Can you tell me Mr. Franklin, did you provide forklift safety training to the ABC Corporation?"

Mr. Franklin: "Yes I did"

Employee's Attorney: "Mr. Franklin, what is your job title?"

Mr. Franklin: "I am an insurance agent for Markett Insurance".

Employee's Attorney: "Mr. Franklin, are you a full time insurance agent?"

Mr. Franklin: "Yes I am"

Employee's Attorney: "How did you become a forklift safety trainer?"

Mr. Franklin: "My boss told me to go train our clients employees."

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Employee's Attorney: "And what is your background in forklift safety?"

Mr. Franklin: "I read a book on it a few months ago."

Regardless of whether you decide to institute an in-house program, allow a third party trainer, or contract a professional consultant, remember that the cost is not always determined up front.

It is when there is an incident, or when there is an O.S.H.A. compliance visit, that the content, documentation, preparation, and presentation of your program will deliver the payback.

The role of professional trainers is simple, teach a specific skill, in a reasonable amount of time, at a reasonable cost, and provide your client with the knowledge and tools that the client needs to then move on.

The second role of the professional trainer is to provide continuing support for that client, no matter the length of time.

The third and final role of the professional trainer is to be honest with his client. To let the client know if there are issues that need to be taken care of, if there is a particular employee that the trainer is concerned with, and to provide the client with the materials needed to succeed.

Does this guarantee that an accident will not happen?

No. there is no training program that can guarantee that.

The fact is all you can do if an accident occurs is to try to limit your liability exposure. This again is where the best program you can put together pays off.

Being able to show what was taught, when it was taught, and who taught it, will assist in this. Showing a well prepared program, evenly enforced, followed up by secondary training, and well documented training records shows that every attempt was made by your company to provide a safe work environment.

A friend of mine once told me, "If it isn't on paper, it doesn't exist".

This is especially true if an accident becomes a civil litigation case.

Don't save pennies now and spend major dollars later. Take the right approach and properly train your operators.

Author and keynote speaker Kenneth Hutchins has over 30 years experience in the Security Industry serving as a Law Enforcement Specialist with both military and civilian agencies in addition to Loss Prevention Management with some of America's largest retailers. Mr. Hutchins' expertise in security and entertaining presentations have made him a sought after keynote speaker in the private sector. Author of "Stealing Back Your Profits" a guide for small and mid-size business and of multiple safety programs Mr. Hutchins teaches at several community colleges around Texas. Mr. Hutchins is the founder and President of Industrial Truck Safety. Mr. Hutchins also serves as the Operations Manager of Bedrock Electronic Security Technology (BEST) a division of EMCS, Inc guiding the convergence of Physical Security with Information Technology (I.T.) Services and Telecommunications Services offered by BEST and its sister company Bedrock Services.