

A **66 year old female** employee was **struck by a forklift** as she stepped out into the aisle from a blind corner. The victim fell to the concrete floor hitting her head. This incident was reported as a hospitalization, however, the victim succumbed to her injuries about 9 days later.

On the morning of the incident, the victim retrieved a cup of coffee from the break room and proceeded into the plant traveling South through an area known as B-Building. She walked on the left side of the aisle close to an adjacent cinder block wall to keep clear of potential powered industrial truck (PIT) traffic. That wall ends at an intersecting aisle to the left which leads in and out of the company's F- Warehouse. The victim stopped briefly at the end of the wall before proceeding into the intersection. At about the same time, a forklift operator was leaving F-Warehouse traveling West towards the same intersection to make a right-hand turn.

A fellow employee working nearby, noticed that the victim and the forklift were approaching the corner at the same time. He shouted to warn her because he didn't think they could see each other, but it was too late. The two met suddenly in the intersection. The forklift operator slammed on his brakes and the victim stopped, but the PIT struck her on her left side knocking her backwards onto the floor. The fellow employee and another both saw and heard the victim's head strike the concrete floor multiple times when she landed. Many coworkers rushed to her side and interacted with her. Although she was conscious and had no visible injuries, they knew her head had struck the floor quite hard and could tell her senses were dulled. They called emergency medical services (EMS) and encouraged her to remain still until help arrived to check on her. While they waited and tried to comfort her, the employees noted a decline in her awareness. She was transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital where she remained hospitalized for just over a week and eventually passed away due to complications from her head injury.

During an interview with the forklift operator, he stated that he had used his horn about 15 feet before reaching the intersection; however, in an interview with the employer immediately after the incident, he admitted that the distance may have been as much as 30 feet away.

Furthermore, this incident was initially handled as a hospitalization by TOSHA conducting a Rapid Response Investigation (RRI). The employer conducted an internal investigation in which a storage issue with what was referred to as "core totes" was discovered. These large plastic bins are 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide. The company had some of them stacked two-high right at the corner at the time of the incident. Company pictures taken after the incident show this storage configuration and illustrate how it could have played a role in this unfortunate event.

**Citation(s) as Originally Issued**

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

**Citation 1 Item 1**

**Serious**

**\$4,000**

**29 CFR 1910.176(a):** Where mechanical handling equipment was used, sufficient safe clearances were not allowed for aisles and wherever turns or passage were made. Aisles and passageways were not kept clear and in good repair, with no obstruction across or in aisles that could create a hazard. Permanent aisles and passageways were not appropriately marked.

In that four employees were exposed to struck-by hazards due to abrupt interactions between powered industrial trucks (PIT) and pedestrians caused by the storage and stacking of large plastic bins (a.k.a. core totes) at a blind corner in the B building area of the factory.

**Citation 1 Item 2**

**Serious**

**\$4,000**

**29 CFR 1910.178(n)(4):** Driver did not slow down and sound the horn at cross aisles and other locations where vision is obstructed.

In that four employees were exposed to struck-by hazards due to abrupt interactions between powered industrial trucks (PIT) and pedestrians caused by an operator failing to sound their horn at a blind corner in the B building area of the factory.

2--Struck by forklift—Insp #1726215 HDK Industries Inc.

