

Chapter 16

Mobile plant – traffic management



The hazard

The safe movement of people, product, forklifts and vehicles within, through and around our worksites creates challenges for many work sites. Put simply pedestrians and vehicles/ forklifts do not mix.

In handling traffic on our public thoroughfares, we try as much as we can to separate pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The same approach needs to be taken at worksites. Where forklifts are used, it's best to regard them as vehicles and the forklift access ways as roads.

For various reasons workplaces may find this difficult, for example:

- A lack of space due to growth and/or downsizing of the business or multiple businesses on site
- Many vehicles including forklifts and pedestrians sharing the same or narrow roadways
- Ad hoc changes to the business leading to blind corners, poor lighting arrangements, reliance on mirrors for traffic control
- Reliance on line markings or low/poorly constructed bollards to separate types of traffic.

Experience shows that it is possible to fix these common problems.

Established workplaces will need to review their current practices. Of course, it's much easier for those designing a new area, but the same principles apply.

The Regulations

The Regulations for mobile plants are very basic - the PCBU/employer must take measure to control the risk of:

- Overturning
- Things falling on operator
- Operator being ejected
- Collision
- Mechanical failure of pressurized elements
- Possibility of plant colliding with pedestrians including having a warning device
- Preventing another person riding on the plant without same level of protection as operator.

There are Codes of Practice for some mobile plants.

It's important to remember that the design of forklifts makes it difficult for operators to see clearly.

Traffic management – mobile plant and pedestrians

When making decisions about traffic management, it is essential to make sure everyone is consulted about people and mobile plant movement. Make time for:

- Forklift drivers to explain the production demands and the routes they are required to travel.
- Mapping out the traffic flows, including frequency and any unusual routes e.g. during overtime, out of hours work, shutdowns
- Checking with everyone that this is **what actually** happens, not what they think should happen.

Apply the Hierarchy of Control - For traffic management many controls will be needed in combination with each other.

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Options

Best Option – Can another piece of mobile equipment be used instead of a forklift? e.g. pedestrian lift truck (substitution).

Next Best Option – Isolating mobile plants from pedestrians:

- Separate out pedestrians and moving vehicles by more than a yellow line; production pressures and lack of space mean lines will get breached. Use bollards instead (isolation/engineering controls)
- Consider using moveable and permanent barriers to separate workers and vehicles when vehicles come into fixed workstation areas or temporary work areas e.g. during stock take (work practices)
- Design the routes: Don't rely on mirrors, blind spots need to be avoided, especially around doorways and thoroughfares
- Many of our workplaces are noisy, ensure that both visual and auditory warnings signals are used and working

Administrative Controls: Provide rest break areas for drivers and operators during delivery and loading that are away from dispatch and delivery areas.

Further information

www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/formspublications/publications/Pages/forkliftsafetyreducingtherisks.aspx

Australian Standards AS 2359 series on Industrial Lift Trucks AS 2359.2-2013: cover the operation, maintenance, repair and modification of self-propelled industrial trucks and their attachments.