

Forklift Crossings: A Horn Does Not Clear the Path

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Why this matters

A pedestrian crossing can look organized while a stored pallet hides the approach. Horns and eye contact help communication, but neither creates a protected crossing.

Objective: Confirm that today's crossing separates pedestrians from forklift movement.

Key hazards or failure points

Blocked sightlines; shortcuts; rear swing; loads hiding people; pedestrians assuming a driver has seen them.

Practical controls

- Keep pedestrian routes separate where possible. Use the site's controlled crossing and keep storage out of its approach and waiting areas.
- Operators follow the traffic plan, maintain a clear travel view and yield to pedestrians. Stop when the route is not clear.
- Pedestrians use designated paths and wait outside the movement area until the site's crossing process permits passage. Stay clear of elevated loads.

Verify It in the Field

With traffic safely held, inspect both approaches for today's obstructions, lighting and usable waiting space. Include doors opening toward the crossing.

Compare barriers, markings and crossing instructions with the actual traffic plan. Confirm that workers and visitors can reach their destination without a shortcut.

Have the operator and pedestrian explain who waits and how movement resumes. Confirm prescribed warning-device checks separately; never use a person as a test obstacle.

Stop and reassess

Stop affected movement for an occupied crossing, blocked view, displaced barrier or unclear priority. Restore the crossing controls and brief affected people before resuming.

Ask the crew

1. What changed our view today?
2. Where do people wait safely?
3. What tells the operator the whole route is clear?

Use this HOP tool — Job-site review: With traffic held, compare the crossing described in the briefing with the crossing in front of you. Name one difference affecting visibility or access. Assign its correction and the evidence needed before reopening; do not demonstrate the hazard using moving equipment.

Sources: OSHA 1910.178, 1926.602 and forklift eTools; DOE Vol. 2, pp. 8–9. HOP concepts adapted from DOE-HDBK-1028-2009, Vol. 2 (June 2009). No claim to original U.S. Government work; no government endorsement implied.

Free next step: JHA/JSA planning and field-verification worksheet

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/forklift-pedestrian-crossings