



Accident management

New moves by the European Union are underway that should eventually lead to some detailed, EU-wide data on **forklift accidents**.

Finding out how many forklift-related accidents take place each year in the EU and what has caused them is no simple task.

Individual EU member states do collect statistics on industrial accidents and some collect data on those specifically involving lift trucks. But how that data is collected and how individual accidents are defined has never been harmonised. The EU itself, meanwhile, has never directly collected any pan-European forklift-specific accident data at all. "Gathering of accident figures at European

level is not in OSHA's competence. There are a considerable number of accidents in Europe across all sectors, which all deserve attention and which all have causes and circumstances to consider," says Birgit Müller, a spokesperson at the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA).

"Data comparison across 27 member states is obviously not an easy task for all the different kinds of accidents in all the industrial sectors in Europe."

What accident figures the EU does collect also contain no real data on the direct causes

of accidents. There are, however, plans to include exactly this information in the near future.

Antti Karjalainen, a spokesman for the EU's official statistical office, Eurostat, says: "We are currently looking to extend the accident at work figures to include details about the causes and circumstances of accidents. This issue of how well forklift trucks will be specifically identified within that, however, is something we've not yet fully established. It's a very specialised area and I'm not sure it will be feasible... the real question, perhaps, is how many member states will be able to provide that information."

The EU is currently in consultation with member states about how the causes and circumstances of accidents should be classified and reported, he adds, but sadly, the proposals do not currently specify lift trucks as a separate entity.

"At the moment, we are simply identifying one cause as 'machines and equipment',"

he explains. "The problem is that there are so many industries and so many accident prevention issues to address..."

Although the first of the new-style reports on accidents at work should be out by the end of the year, therefore, it still won't include enough detail about the kind of equipment involved in accidents to allow for any analysis of lift truck safety.

So just how long might it be before the data sets are refined to a point where forklifts can be identified in the EU data as the key agent in an accident?

"I wouldn't promise anything for next year... but maybe in two to three years' time this will be the case," says Karjalainen.

eureka certainly hopes so because the first step in reducing the number of forklift-related accidents across Europe is clearly to find out how many there actually are – and how exactly they are being caused.

We'll keep you posted...■

Events calendar

Date, Event, Location, Website	Overview
7-10 November Suisse Transport Bern, Switzerland www.suissetransport.ch	Distribution and transport exhibition covering road and rail vehicles, maintenance and related systems.
13-16 November Europack/Euromanut Lyon, France www.europackonline.com	Two exhibitions run together and totalling over 500 exhibitors. Europack includes suppliers of packaging, labelling, marking and coding systems while Euromanut will feature a wide variety of handling, storage and warehouse equipment.
21-22 November RFID 2007 Paris, France www.rfid-show.com	5000 sq m exhibition dedicated to radio frequency identification (RFID) systems and applications.
4-6 December Intermodal Transport & Logistics 2007 Amsterdam, The Netherlands www.intermodal-events.com	Intermodal container exhibition and conference.
23-25 January Progilog Paris, France www.progilog.com	Supply chain management exhibition focusing on supply chain planning, execution, enterprise resource management and consulting.
27-28 February Logicon 2008 Brussels, Belgium www.wbresearch.com	12th annual supply chain conference for FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) sector.
19-21 February Logimat 2008 Stuttgart, Germany www.logimat-messe.de	6th international trade fair for distribution, materials handling and information flow.

