

# TO THE POINT ABOUT PITS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

**LENGTH: 13 MINUTES**

**PRODUCTION YEAR: 2022**

## **PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:**

Our workplace is full of hazards, hazards that can hurt us or kill us. Controlling these hazards and preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program. One such hazard is the interaction between powered industrial trucks or “PITs” and pedestrians. Powered industrial trucks are heavy and powerful. Any contact between a PIT and a pedestrian can result in serious injury or death.

This program is designed to highlight the dangers that are present when PITs and pedestrians work in shared spaces. It also describes the safe work practices necessary, such as situational awareness and visibility, to minimize those dangers and avoid injuries.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:**

After watching the program, the participant should be able to explain the following:

- The need to be aware of your surroundings;
- Traffic patterns;
- Situational awareness;
- The importance of visibility;
- Blind spots and other hazards when PITs and pedestrians are in close proximity.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Ensuring that both pedestrians and the operators of powered industrial trucks understand and follow safe work practices to avoid incidents can prevent injuries and save lives.
- That is the point of our facility’s policies regarding “PITs” and pedestrian safety. And that is the point of this program. So, pay close attention as we “get to the point” about PIT and pedestrian safety.
- Blind corners and intersections, unexpected vehicle movements, blind spots and obstructed views, raised loads and falling objects, pinch points and crush hazards, complacency, as well as distractions, are all potential causes of incidents involving pedestrians and powered industrial trucks.

### **AWARENESS OF SURROUNDINGS**

- As we proceed with this program, it’s important to understand that PITs and pedestrians work in shared spaces.
- Operators and pedestrians have a shared responsibility for safety, and that responsibility begins with awareness. This is called “situational awareness.” It’s important to have an understanding of what’s going on around you at all times.
- This is especially true when the work area contains frequently moving vehicles, pedestrians in motion, or changing conditions. In other words, every factory, warehouse, construction site or industrial worksite.
- For example, the aisle that was clear of traffic a moment ago may now contain a moving forklift. The trailer you just exited with a load may contain a pedestrian when you return for the next one. And the area behind your truck that was clear a moment ago may not be clear now.
- To maintain an awareness of your surroundings, first take a moment to assess the area for potential hazards before initially entering. This applies to pedestrians as well as PIT operators.

### **TRAFFIC PATTERNS**

- It's important to be aware of all hazards, but for the specific hazards related to powered industrial trucks and pedestrians, look for common traffic patterns and know which areas to avoid.
- Material handling traffic often follows a common pattern of picking materials and loads, traveling with them, and then placing them in a new location.
- Pedestrians should understand this pattern and avoid entering it whenever possible.
- Look for various signs and floor markings that indicate areas where it is safe for pedestrians to travel and where it is not.
- PIT operators should make themselves aware of common pedestrian pathways such as those leading to restrooms, breakrooms, the cafeteria, or exits, and make it a point to avoid driving in these areas whenever possible.
- Both operators and pedestrians should understand which marked aisles are shared spaces, which aisles are reserved for vehicle traffic only, and which pathways are set aside for pedestrian use only.
- Understanding these common traffic patterns and limiting your travel to designated areas can go a long way in preventing PIT and pedestrian incidents.

### **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

- After entering the work area, it's important to maintain your situational awareness. This requires that you stop working and look around periodically to reassess your surroundings for new PIT traffic and other hazards.
- PIT operators must be able to keep up with the comings and goings of all pedestrians that enter their immediate work area.
- One easy way to maintain this awareness is to make a point of looking all around before moving.
- For pedestrians, this means before walking to the toolbox, look around. Before backing away from the supply cabinet, look around. Before moving with the crane load, look around. This seems simple but many pedestrian injuries occur due to a failure to look before stepping.
- Of course, certified PIT operators are taught to look all around and sound the horn before moving their truck in any direction. This critical safety rule must become a habit for operators and pedestrians.
- And finally, we must maintain our awareness while underway, also.
- This requires pedestrians and PIT operators to scan their path of travel while underway so all hazards and obstacles may be avoided.
- This means traveling at a slow, safe speed so everyone has time to react and maintain a safe separation.
- Pedestrians should never run in the workplace, and PIT operators should obey their organization's speed limits and drive even slower in crowded or challenging conditions.

### **VISIBILITY**

- Next, let's talk about visibility. In order for operators and pedestrians to be aware of each other, each must be able to be seen.
- Visibility starts with our clothing. Best practice is for all pedestrians and PIT operators to wear a high visibility vest or clothing.
- Remember, PIT operators are also pedestrians as they travel or when they dismount their vehicle.
- Make sure you follow your organization's policies related to high visibility clothing and put it on when required.
- Of course, any time visibility is obstructed, such as at blind corners or intersections, in changing light conditions, or by the materials being moved, extra precautions must be taken to avoid collisions and incidents.
- Pedestrians must stop and look for traffic at all intersections and blind corners.
- Be extra cautious where doors or stairs open directly into active traffic areas.
- Be sure to utilize any mirrors that have been placed to assist in looking for oncoming traffic.
- PIT operators must also stop and look for traffic and pedestrians at all intersections and corners.
- Additionally, PIT operators must also sound the horn. Sounding the horn is an additional safety requirement that alerts others to the presence of the powered industrial truck.

- Pedestrians should listen for the sound of horns when assessing any intersection or area for PIT traffic.

### **PEDESTRIAN AND A PIT IN CLOSE PROXIMITY**

- Any time a pedestrian and a powered industrial truck find themselves in close proximity to each other, the PIT operator must stop and yield to the pedestrian.
- However, in this situation, the pedestrian must ensure that the operator is aware of their presence before approaching the truck or crossing its path. And the only way to know for sure that you have been seen is to establish eye contact with the operator.
- Never assume a PIT operator can see you. Stay well clear and make eye contact. Do not approach or cross until the operator gives you a definitive indication that it is safe to do so.
- This rule not only applies to well-marked intersections, but also to the traditional work areas where PIT operators may not normally expect pedestrian traffic.
- Approaching an active powered industrial truck is extremely hazardous and can easily result in severe injuries. For this reason, many organizations require PIT operators to completely shut down their truck before allowing pedestrians to approach.

### **BLIND SPOTS**

- Because visibility is such an important part of PIT and pedestrian safety, pedestrians must make it a point to stay well clear of the blind spots of all powered industrial trucks.
- Never approach or stand directly behind a powered industrial truck. This is a blind spot that makes it hard for the operator to see you. This location is particularly dangerous in tight quarters where the truck backs up frequently while handling materials.
- Pedestrians should never pass between a PIT and any solid object.
- Be aware that the material being moved may also block the view of a PIT operator.
- Pedestrians should understand that if they cannot see the eyes of the operator, then the operator cannot see them. Keep an extra wide berth from any PIT that is operating with an obstructed view.
- If possible, PIT operators should drive in reverse when their forward view is obstructed. When this is not possible, a spotter should be used to help avoid collisions.
- How would you feel about walking through a busy work area blindfolded? Or operating a PIT with your eyes closed? That wouldn't be very safe, right? And yet, that is exactly what happens when pedestrians are looking at a phone or other distraction while walking.
- And when PIT operators take their eyes off their travel path to handle a drink or look at some other distraction, it just takes a moment to have a collision, or worse.
- As we have stressed throughout this program, maintaining awareness of our surroundings is the key to PIT and pedestrian safety. Make it a point to not let distractions take your eyes off your main task of looking where you are going.

### **BE AWARE OF PIT HAZARDS**

- And finally, understand that powered industrial trucks come in many shapes and sizes. Each contains a variety of pinch points and crushing hazards that can easily amputate hands and feet.
- Do not operate or perform maintenance on any PIT unless you are trained and authorized.
- Even small PITs, like a powered pallet jack, are extremely heavy and powerful. Serious injury will occur if the wheels run over a foot or if a person becomes pinned against a solid object. Pedestrians must stay clear at all times.
- Be aware that PITs can swing wide while turning and the forks, load, or counterweight often pass near to solid objects, creating a crushing hazard that pedestrians must be aware of and take measures to stay clear of.
- Operators must not become complacent to these hazards, and must ensure all pedestrians are clear before moving the truck, turning, lifting or lowering a load.

- Another hazard is the potential for falling objects. Due to the risk of falling items, pedestrians must never be allowed to approach a PIT with a raised load or be allowed to stand or pass under any raised load or forks.
- In addition to the risk of falling items, should the forks be lowered unexpectedly, or the hydraulics fail, a serious injury could occur.
- And finally, most PITs are not designed to accommodate riders. Never attempt to catch a ride on a powered industrial truck. And never attempt to ride the forks to reach an elevated item. This is extremely dangerous and PIT operators must not allow it.

## **CONCLUSION**

- In this program, we have discussed the importance of assessing work areas for PIT and pedestrian traffic and obeying all aisle markings and signs.
- We pointed out the importance of visibility, which includes stopping and looking and listening for traffic at all intersections and blind corners.
- We emphasized that pedestrians must make eye contact with operators before approaching or crossing, and we explained some of the unique hazards that PITs can present to pedestrians if they come too close while a PIT is actively being operated.
- Always remember that pedestrians and PITs operate in a shared workspace and both operators and pedestrians have a responsibility to prevent injuries. After all, preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program, which is why you must make it a point to be safe.