

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Cal/OSHA Cites Marine Cargo Handling Company for Fatal Forklift Accident at Port of San Diego

San Diego—Cal/OSHA has issued citations to marine cargo handler SSA Pacific Inc. for willful and serious safety violations following the investigation of a fatal forklift accident at the Port of San Diego.

On January 3, a longshoreman was driving a forklift into a transit shed when he collided with a concrete support column and suffered fatal injuries after being thrown from the forklift. Cal/OSHA's investigation found that the employee was not wearing a seatbelt and that the forklift had multiple safety devices disabled, including a seatbelt warning buzzer and mast interlock system designed to disconnect power from the hydraulic lift when the operator is unseated.

"Forklift safety and training of operators must be taken seriously," said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. "Employers must ensure that seat belts are used and that safety devices such as warning systems to ensure seat belt use are not altered."

Cal/OSHA issued six citations totaling \$205,235 in proposed penalties to SSA Pacific Inc., a division of Seattle-based international marine cargo handler SSA Marine.

The citations issued included four serious violations for the employer's failure to ensure that forklift operators use seatbelts, properly maintain and inspect forklifts, ensure operators were effectively trained and for improperly altering forklift safety features. A general violation was cited for the employer's failure to establish and maintain an effective heat illness prevention plan.

SSA Pacific was also issued a citation for a willful-serious violation as the employer failed to ensure workers perform a forklift safety check at the beginning of each shift and report unsafe conditions, a violation the company was [cited for in 2016](#) following an accident inspection at the Port of Long Beach.

The incident in 2016 occurred when two workers improperly attempted to lift a 15-ton forklift from the hatch of a ship with a crane. One worker was hospitalized overnight for injuries to his ribs and lungs when he was pinned by the mast of the running forklift.

A citation is classified as willful when evidence indicates that the employer committed an intentional and knowing violation, or was aware that a hazardous condition existed and made no reasonable effort to eliminate it. A citation is classified as serious when there is a realistic possibility that death or serious harm could result from the actual hazard created by the violation.

Forklift safety requirements are summarized on page 65 of [Cal/OSHA's Pocket Guide for the Construction Industry](#).

The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, is the division within the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) that helps protect California's workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace.

[Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their safety and health programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Peter Melton or Lucas Brown at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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The [California Department of Industrial Relations](#), established in 1927, protects and improves the health, safety, and economic well-being of over 18 million wage earners, and helps their employers comply with state labor laws. DIR is housed within the [Labor & Workforce Development Agency](#). For general inquiries, contact DIR's Call Center at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734) for help in locating the appropriate [division or program](#) in our department.