

## Investigation Process

### *What triggers a fatality or catastrophe investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor?*

- A worker's death.
- Hospitalization of three or more employees.
- The department may also receive information of a fatality or catastrophe from media reports or referrals from other government agencies.

### *How is NCDOL notified?*

- An employer must notify NCDOL within eight hours of a worker's fatality or the hospitalization of three or more workers.

### *What will the investigation focus on?*

- The investigation will usually be limited to the events surrounding the accident unless observations at the site indicate a broader investigation is needed.

### *What will happen during the investigation?*

- An NCDOL investigator will go to the accident site and collect physical evidence, including photographs.
- The investigator will interview employees, witnesses and management officials about the accident to determine its cause.
- Any violations of safety and health standards will be noted and citations will be issued.

### *How long will the investigation take?*

- An investigation can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, depending on the complexity of the accident.

### *When are investigation results disclosed?*

- Citations and penalties, if issued, can be released to the public on the issuance date.
- Other contents of the file cannot be released until the case is closed or final order on citations is rendered.



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*This forklift has several safety features, including an overhead guard.. Employers must ensure that forklift operators are trained to operate them safely.*

## The Investigation

Investigators will seek to determine several factors, including whether:

- Aisles were designated as travel paths for forklifts.
- Vehicles were operated at a safe speed.
- Only authorized personnel operated and maintained forklifts.
- Employees avoided standing under raised forks.
- Dockboard and trailer were secured while loading and unloading.
- Operators were trained in safe vehicle operation.
- Vehicles were parked with the forks lowered and brakes set.
- Carbon monoxide produced by forklifts was monitored.
- Operators wore seat belts while operating a forklift.

**Standards:** 29 CFR 1910.178, Powered Industrial Trucks

**Industry Type:** General Industry

**Accident Type:** Powered industrial truck accident

**Statistical Data:** In 2005, NCDOL investigated 80 workplace fatalities.

### *What programs does the Department of Labor have in place to prevent forklift accidents?*

**Free training:** Workshops, training and consultation in both English and Spanish.

**Publications:** An industry guide that discusses forklift operator training and the safe operation of powered industrial trucks.