Powered Industrial Truck Awareness for Drivers and Pedestrians

Differences Between Driving a Powered Industrial Truck and a Car:

- Trucks move considerably slower, and most are smaller than cars — deceptively so, because their greater weight makes up for this slower and smaller size in terms of the hazards they present.
- Since most powered industrial trucks are not designed with shock absorbers, load spills can easily occur from road shocks (ruts, dips, debris, rough spots, etc.). The tires cannot compensate for the uneven surfaces encountered. Speed must be reduced considerably when traveling over these hazards.
- Visibility is often poor for the operator when traveling forward with a bulky load.
- A truck must be operated more smoothly than a car in order to maintain adequate stability; a truck is more easily tipped over than a car because of the location of the load, the truck's higher center of gravity and the truck's narrower track width (distance between wheels on an axle).
- Both ends of a counterbalanced truck (load and counterweight) swing during a turn due to rear wheel steering — driver wheels must be in front (load bearing) for such trucks to get adequate traction with a small tire; maneuverability in tight quarters is enhanced by rear steering; extra room must be allowed when turning to clear stationary objects, other moving trucks and pedestrians.
- The truck steers more easily with a load (but *not* an overload), due to lower weight on the steering (rear) wheels, while a car steers easiest *unloaded*.
- Trucks, especially battery-electric models, can be considerably quieter than a car; pedestrians and other truck operators may not hear you approaching, especially in noisy areas.
- Overloading a counterbalanced truck can cause loss of steering (rear wheels lose traction necessary for steering).
- All cars are equipped with headlights; on trucks, operating lights are often options — changes in plant lighting or storage arrangements may require that non-lighted trucks be equipped with lights, or that lighted trucks be used to ensure adequate light levels for safe operation.
- One way that cars and trucks do *not* differ: turns must be slow in order to make a sharp turn, especially when the vehicle is loaded, because the higher the turning speed and load weight, the more the steering wheels creep (increasing the turning radius).

Differences Between Plant Pedestrians and Sidewalk Pedestrians:

- Pedestrians on a sidewalk have a special walkway free from motorized traffic; plant and yard pedestrians share the “road” — both operator and pedestrian must respect the difference and take precautions.
- Over-the-road vehicles rarely carry loads that are unsecured or over-wide which could strike a pedestrian by their size or instability; trucks may do so frequently.
- The auto operator can often see pedestrians entering the roadway, and sidewalk pedestrians often have traffic signals to protect them; in many plants, blind intersections are common and signals uncommon.
- The truck and the load often occupy most of the width of a narrow aisle; streets that narrow with no sidewalks are relatively rare.
- Pedestrians in the plant aisles do not always take the precautions they would in the street — they may not be watching for truck traffic.
- One way that plant and sidewalk pedestrians do *not* differ: neither stands a chance in a collision with a 3,000 pound car, a 10,000 pound lift truck, or a 6,000 pound load!