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Loading Dock Safety Equipment: A New Product for Forklift Safety

by [Pat Matuszak](#)

"Each year about 100 workers are killed and almost 95,000 injured in industrial truck accidents," reports a 1998 OSHA news release. One of the most deadly accidents that can occur at industrial shipping and receiving docks happens when forklifts are driven off loading docks that are unoccupied by trailers. Forklift drivers often travel rapidly in a repetitive pattern while loading and unloading material for hours. They may not notice when a truck has left the loading dock bay and drive right off the dock, even going through a closed dock door.

This story is about an experienced equipment professional who invented his own solution to this common loading dock safety problem. The Carr Safety Barrier was invented by maintenance manager Jack Carr in response to a tragic loading dock accident that caused a driver's death in the West Michigan area. Disappointed with the products available and their costs, he set out to develop a safety solution for the loading docks at his shipping and receiving site that would prevent accidents, be simple in design, and affordable.

He constructed prototypes and ran crash tests until he found a solution that would stop 9,500 lbs. at 4 miles per hour. His final design used a custom extruded aluminum I-beam barrier because it was light yet strong and provided 12 to 15 inches of deflection in a high speed impact. This stopped the forklift slowly and safely to protect drivers from injury, as opposed to steel devices that gave only one inch of deflection. Jack

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could cause serious injury themselves. He wanted his solution to act like a steel rubber band, protecting both the vehicle and its driver.

He also wanted to protect his dock doors by stopping the forklift before it hit a closed door, thus preventing expensive repairs and delays. The barriers he had seen that were part of a dock leveler could stop a forklift from falling all the way off the dock, but because they were located outside the door on the edge of the leveler, they couldn't prevent damage to the dock door. For this reason, Jack decided he wanted an interior barrier, but the ones on the market required drilling anchor bolts into the floor and he knew they might snap off during an impact. To solve this problem, he designed his barrier to be mounted on the cement-filled bollards already present at most docks. His system of steel mounting brackets not only gave superior strength, but eliminated the extra cost, time, and space requirements of installing other equipment. The entire installation took him less than an hour and the design allowed full access to the doors.

About one hundred of these inexpensive patented barriers have been distributed through Matuszak Marketing Group, Inc. over the past three years and users have been happy to report that they have been effective in this important area of accident prevention at industrial and warehouse loading docks.

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