

Safe, Agile, and Ready to Scale - Forklift Simulator at a chemical distribution center

THE CHALLENGE

Any warehouse manager knows safety is critical. At MilliporeSigma, though, the stakes are particularly high: forklift operators are under significant time pressure, navigating roughly 300,000 SKUs ranging in size from a needle to a 100kg drum. The delicate nature of those products presents a challenge on the warehouse floor.

Many of MilliporeSigma's SKUs are worth thousands of dollars. And if there's an incident, there's the potential for a major spillage of harmful chemicals, risking disruption to production and picking. Warehouse staff could be injured. A large-scale fire is entirely possible.

The consequences could be as minor as a simple cleanup all the way to a complete shutdown of the business and everything in between.

ABOUT MILLIPORESIGMA

MilliporeSigma is a life science business owned by German multinational pharmaceutical leader Merck KGaA, producing & distributing chemicals & laboratory supplies for laboratories and industry worldwide. MilliporeSigma's Milwaukee warehouse is one of Merck KGaA's 64 distribution centers fulfilling large life science corporations across the globe.

THE SOLUTION

MilliporeSigma's priority was to enhance staff skills to maintain quality and safety in a hazardous environment. To achieve this, the company focuses on hiring talented individuals and training them internally, ensuring they meet specific safety and operational standards required for their roles.

To support this training, MilliporeSigma invested in two forklift simulators. These provide a safer, controlled environment for employees to learn and practice operating industrial equipment, allowing them to gain confidence and skills before handling actual equipment.

The simulators are also used for cross-training existing staff, helping them gain proficiency on different types of forklifts. For example, an employee experienced in one type of forklift can use the simulator to learn another type, promoting versatility and adaptability within the team.

In addition to initial training and cross-training, the simulators are an integral part of the retraining process required by OSHA and ISO standards. They provide a practical, hands-on step before employees return to operating actual forklifts, further enhancing safety and maintaining high standards of operation.

“The simulator reduces how long it takes for someone to feel confident and capable on a truck.”

- Austin Noll, Distribution Manager - MilliporeSigma -

BRIAN'S TESTIMONIAL

Before, we'd have to plan in our schedules that we're getting someone on the trucks, not knowing if it would take a day, two days, four days ... Now, there's a strategic program. They just get on the simulator and they have to pass.

When they get on a real truck, it's not new to them like it was in the past. They're able to get out there on the warehouse floor much quicker - maybe it's a week instead of three weeks. And anecdotally, we've seen a reduction already in our rack damage.



At a customer's training center

THE RESULTS

MilliporeSigma's simulated forklift training program is still in its early stages, so quantifiable results are not yet available. However, early indications suggest positive outcomes. The training process is now more formalized, with a strategic program that requires employees to pass the simulator before operating a real forklift. This approach has reduced the time it takes for employees to become confident and capable, allowing them to start working on the warehouse floor faster.

The simulator training has also led to a noticeable decrease in incidents, such as rack damage, as employees feel more prepared when transitioning from the simulator to the actual truck. The positive feedback from associates reflects a greater sense of safety and confidence, as they find the simulator less intimidating than direct hands-on training.

CONCLUSIONS

A more skilled workforce has had a significant impact on overall productivity. The company can now adapt more quickly to increased labor demands, reallocating resources to different areas as needed, which enhances operational agility.

Overall, the new training approach offers a more effective way of learning, helping employees quickly gain the skills and confidence necessary to perform their tasks safely and efficiently.

In short, as Austin puts it:

“Ultimately it’s a new way of learning.”



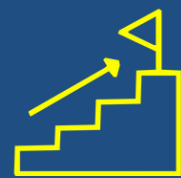
MAKE MISTAKES IN THE SIMULATOR

Learn the consequences of a mistake in a virtual environment



SAVE TIME AND MONEY

The confidence built in VR helps to quickly transition to the forklift



EASY TO SETUP AND SCALE UP

Invest in a strategic development program in VR and scale up easily