



## Forklift Safety

Powered industrial trucks, more commonly known as forklifts, are regulated under OSHA's Powered Industrial Truck Standard (29 CFR 1910.178). This is a general overview of forklift safety. To be forklift certified, operators must complete additional training covering all relevant statutes of OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178. In addition, forklift-competent supervisors must conduct workplace-specific and forklift-specific training and assessment before employees start operating this equipment and as needed after they start using it.

### Understanding Powered Industrial Trucks

Powered industrial trucks are specialized vehicles that carry, push, pull, lift, load, unload, stack or tier material of various sizes, shapes and weights. They may be gas-, diesel-, propane- or electric-powered. One of the first essential safety tasks is using the right forklift for the task at hand. As part of your on-the-job training, your employer will familiarize you with the specific equipment at your workplace and have you demonstrate that you can operate it safely.

### Most Common Types of Forklift Accidents

Unsafe operating procedures, lack of safety rule enforcement and insufficient training contribute to the majority of forklift accidents. The most common types of forklift accidents are:

- ✔ Forklift rollovers
- ✔ Falls from the forklift
- ✔ Pedestrian contact
- ✔ Imbalanced/falling loads

### Rules for Forklift Operations

Remember the following when operating a forklift.

#### DON'TS

- ✔ Don't drive up to anyone standing in front of a bench or another fixed object.
- ✔ Don't allow anyone to stand or pass under the elevated portion of any truck, whether it's loaded or empty.
- ✔ Don't allow unauthorized personnel to ride on the vehicle.
- ✔ Don't place your arms or legs between the uprights of the mast or outside the running lines of the truck.
- ✔ Don't engage in stunt driving or horseplay.
- ✔ Don't fill fuel tanks while the engine is running.
- ✔ Don't travel with empty forks elevated.
- ✔ Don't raise or lower the load while traveling.
- ✔ Never exceed the rated load capacity, and make sure the load is stable and balanced on the forks.



## DO'S

- ✔ When leaving a forklift unattended or entering an elevator, fully lower the forks, place controls in neutral, shut the power off and set the brakes. Chock the wheels if you park on an incline.
- ✔ Maintain a safe distance from the edge of ramps or platforms when working on any elevated dock, platform or freight car.
- ✔ Leave sufficient headroom under overhead installations, lights, pipes, sprinkler systems, etc.
- ✔ Follow all traffic regulations.
- ✔ Yield to all emergency vehicles.
- ✔ Always stop at all rail crossings and cross railroad tracks diagonally whenever possible.
- ✔ Slow down and sound the horn at cross-aisles where vision is obstructed.
- ✔ Ascend and descend grades slowly.
- ✔ When ascending or descending grades greater than 10%, drive loaded trucks with the forks facing toward the incline.
- ✔ Slow down for wet and slippery floors.
- ✔ Always inspect your powered industrial truck before each shift.
- ✔ Wear your seatbelt at all times.
- ✔ Use three points of contact when mounting and dismounting.

## Sample Forklift Inspection Items

Refer to your equipment-specific information and manual for a full list of inspection criteria. Some inspection items are:

- ✔ Inspect the forklift before each use or at least daily.
- ✔ Check fluid levels, such as oil and hydraulics.
- ✔ Look for leaks, cracks, compromised hoses or other visible defects. Test the steering.
- ✔ Assess the tire condition, the pressure and the lug nuts.
- ✔ Evaluate the condition of the forks, including the top clip retaining pin and heel. Look for a bend or cracks.
- ✔ Inspect the battery (if present).
- ✔ Ensure the forklift has necessary safety decals and nameplates and they're legible.
- ✔ Perform an operational check. Test the horn, the back-up alarm, warning lights, turn signals and gauges.
- ✔ Raise and lower the forks. Visually examine the mast and tilt it to ensure everything is in working order.

## Load Balancing

Every forklift has a center of gravity, which will shift as you pick up a load, raise it and tilt the mast forward and backward. You also have to be aware of your load center—the distance from the middle of the load to the vertical face of the forks. As the load center increases, the load capacity of the forklift decreases. Do not attempt to lift a load that exceeds the forklift's carrying capacity.

Lateral or side-to-side stability and longitudinal or forward/backward stability are also important to understand. Loads that are too heavy or improperly balanced could tip over or fall off the forklift.

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