



# SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

## Powered Industrial Trucks

Each year, tens of thousands of forklift-related injuries occur in U.S. workplaces. Many employees are injured when lift trucks are inadvertently driven off loading docks, or lifts fall between docks and unsecured trailers. Employees are also struck by lift trucks, or fall while on elevated pallets. Most incidents also involve property damage, including damage to overhead sprinklers, racking, pipes, walls/doorways, electrical conduit, lighting, and machinery.

Unfortunately, most injuries and property damage can be attributed to lack of safe operating procedures, lack of safety rule enforcement, and insufficient or inadequate training.

Powered industrial trucks, commonly called forklifts or lift trucks, are used in many industries, primarily to move materials. They can be used to move, raise, lower, or remove large objects or a number of smaller objects on pallets or in boxes, crates, or other containers. In many facilities, a forklift or lift truck may be the most dangerous piece of machinery used in operations.



Training and OSHA requirements on the reverse side.

### Accident Statistics

- Forklifts account for around 85 deaths every year.
- Forklift accidents that result in serious injury total 34,900 annually.
- Non-serious injuries related to forklift accidents reach 61,800 each year.
- A forklift overturning is the most common incident, accounting for 24% of all forklift accidents.
- If companies implemented more stringent training policies, the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that about 70% of forklift accidents in the US could be prevented.

### Most Common Lift Truck Accidents

- Operating a lift truck without training
- Unsafe driving practices
- Not securing the load
- Not following safety procedures
- Guessing the weight of the load
- Lack of pre-shift inspection
- Lack of routine maintenance
- Not clearing a path of travel



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## Training Requirements

Forklift operators must be 18 years or older and be trained and authorized before operating the lift. The training must be a combination of formal (classroom) & practical (hands-on road test) under the supervision of a qualified trainer. The training conducted must also cover the specific characteristics of each machine that a worker will be operating.

Refresher Training is required when one of the following occurs:

- The operator has been observed to operate the vehicle in an unsafe manner.
- The operator has been involved in an accident or near-miss incident.
- The operator has received an evaluation that reveals that the operator is not operating the truck safely.
- The operator is assigned to drive a different type of truck.
- A condition in the workplace changes in a manner that could affect safe operation of the truck

## Tipovers

There are two basic type of tipovers in a forklift: 1) a forward tip or longitudinal tip, and 2) a lateral or side tip. The procedure to follow in the event of tipover varies depending on the type of tipover and the class of forklifts that you may use in your facility. Reason for tipovers:

- Traveling with a raised load
- Traveling on a hill
- Taking corners quickly
- Worksite hazards
- Loads that are too heavy
- Rough terrains
- False starts/stops

## Stability Triangle

An unloaded lift truck's center of gravity – where the weight has equal concentration – typically is higher than that of a personal vehicle, National Safety Council states. The load has its own center of gravity, and once it's picked up, a combined center of gravity between the load and truck is established.

Lift trucks are built on three-point suspension systems, the physics of which resemble a triangle. Support points lie at both ends of the front axle, with another located at the center of the rear axle. Together this forms a “stability triangle” that operators must stay within when the truck is in motion.:

- Before operation, ensure a load is completely stable and secured on the forks.
- Keep loads low to the ground during operation.
- Keep loads uphill when climbing or descending an incline.
- Drive slowly in wet or slippery conditions.
- Slow down during turns, and use the horn upon encountering traffic.



## Safety Tips

Seatbelts should be worn at all times while operating the lift trucks.

Drivers should operate the lifts at a walking speed.

OSHA requires that all forklifts be examined at least daily before being placed in service. Forklifts used on a round-the-clock basis must be examined after each shift. [29 CFR 1910.178(q)(7)]

Modifications or additions that affect capacity or safe operation shall not be performed without prior written approval from the forklift truck manufacturer. Capacity, operations, and maintenance instruction plates, tags, or decals shall be changed accordingly. [29 CFR 1910.178(a)(4)]

Never alter the roof structure of the lift truck by adding plywood, shrink wrap, tarps or other devices that would restrict overhead visibility. As a reminder any modifications to the lift truck has to be approved by the forklift truck manufacturer.

Shrink wrap is inexpensive, easy to use, and versatile. Use it to secure palletized goods, rolled goods and other materials being moved by the forklift. Securing the load helps keep the load stable and reduces the chance of items falling off the forks. For heavier loads, plastic or cloth banding should be used. As a reminder, metal banding can be dangerous when cutting due to tension in the load. Ensure proper PPE is used during these situations.



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