

FORKLIFT SAFETY TIPS

A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE

Forklifts weigh more than three tons, and can reach a speed of 10mph. These mechanical beasts are of great assistance, yet can also be a source of great danger. Play it safe with these forklift safety tips.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS AND RULES

- ✔ **Before each shift, examine forklifts** for safety purposes.
 - Avoid operating a vehicle that requires maintenance or repair (which should be provided by the respective qualified experts).
 - Inform the shift supervisor of any identified issues, problems, questions, or concerns.
- ✔ **Forklifts operate uniquely;** since they steer from the rear, the back of the vehicle needs a wide sweep to turn.
- ✔ **Never leave an operating forklift unattended.** In fact, leaving keys in an unattended forklift (or, thus, leaving on the ignition of this vehicle) is illegal, and has dire consequences as a safety hazard, even without the actual occurrence of an accident.
- ✔ **Know and never exceed the lifting capacity** of the forklift.
- ✔ **Forklifts must follow designated roadways** at the work site.
- ✔ **Work-site rules and regulations** must be adhered to.
- ✔ **Keep hands and feet away from the cross members of the mast**—should the mast be lowered and catch your hand, you'll suffer from serious injury.
- ✔ **Forklifts need to be refuelled**—after, of course, they've been turned off—at designated and well-ventilated locations.
- ✔ **Forklifts which are not in use** should be carefully parked, with the parking brake applied.

SAFE AND SMOOTH OPERATING

- ✔ As the operator of a forklift, you must receive thorough **forklift safety training and certification** before being entrusted with the heavy machinery.
- ✔ **Be alert and attentive** to your surrounding environment at all times with these forklift safety tips:
 - **Avoid hazards on the floor;** slippery or unstable surfaces, bumps, holes, etc.
 - Driving over small, scattered **hazards** (like shards of wood) may make the load shift and topple, or knock you out of place (and out of control)
 - Direct your forklift forward when driving up **ramps**, but go downhill in reverse.
 - Don't load/unload on the ramp.
 - **Alert others** of your coming with a horn or your voice.
 - **Keep a safe distance** from people and from other trucks
 - **Stop** only when you have enough space to pause safely.
 - **Note any changes** to your operating environment.
- ✔ **Ensure that you are in complete control** of the vehicle.
- ✔ **Stay in the operator's seat,** and keep your body within the frame of the vehicle at all times.
- ✔ **Wear your seat belt** for protection case the vehicle topples; if that's the case, the frame will offer sufficient protection (along with the seatbelt!).
- ✔ **Never allow unauthorized people to drive** or otherwise operate the forklift.
- ✔ **Stick to the appropriate dress code:**
 - Mandatory safety gear (hi-visibility jacket, sturdy footgear, hard-hats)
 - Tight clothing that can't be caught in gears or controls
- ✔ **Never operate with wet or greasy hands or shoes.** You could easily slide or slip and cause an accident.

ELIMINATE DANGERS TO THE SURROUNDING PEOPLE

- ✔ If you're driving, always **keep an eye out for other people** around you, especially those on foot.
- ✔ **Avoid fast moves.** Always drive, stop, turn, and lift or lower the forks slowly and as smoothly as possible.
 - Sudden turns can toss off a load or even the entire forklift off balance, which make it a much greater hazard for the operator and especially the surrounding people.
 - Be especially careful when navigating ramps, inclines, and grades.
- ✔ **Always check carefully before turning or backing up the vehicle.** Keep in mind that people may be walking or standing on one of your blind sides (i.e. behind the vehicle) or obstructed by other obstacles;
- ✔ **No one should be allowed to stand or walk beneath or upon the forks,** whether they're emptied or loaded.



DID YOU KNOW?

Statistically, Forklifts Are Extremely Dangerous

Approximately 35,000 serious injuries and 62,000 non-serious injuries involving forklifts occur in the United States every year. ⁽¹⁾

Approximately 100 U.S Workers Die Each Year From Forklifts

Each year in the United States, nearly 100 workers are killed and another 20,000 are seriously injured in forklift-related incidents. ⁽²⁾



ACTION ITEMS

- ✔ Remember to inspect the forklift daily, before every shift; never operate a forklift with issues or in need of repairs.
- ✔ Forklift operators must be trained, examined, and certified.
- ✔ Know the forklift capacity and never exceed it.
- ✔ Secure and stabilize loads; drive carefully and slowly; and ensure visibility.
- ✔ Always take extra precautions for the people around you.

WHEN LOADS BECOME HAZARDS

- ✔ **Most accidents** with forklifts occur by plummeting loads which crush the person below.
- ✔ **Place loads back** by the mast, where they'll balance most stably; never place loads at the front of the forks.
- ✔ **Never load trucks beyond approved capacity.**
- ✔ **Always travel with the forks positioned as low as possible** for increased stability and protection. Never travel with forks that are elevated and/or tilted forward.
- ✔ Ensure that the **load is stable or strapped** in place before moving the vehicle.
 - The load must be balanced on both forks.
- ✔ **Avoid decaying, warped, or otherwise damaged** skids and pallets.
- ✔ **When stocking, be vigilant** for slipping, unstable, or toppling loads.
 - Have a good view of and easy access to the rack or location where you must position your load.
- ✔ **If your load obstructs your view**, operate the forklift in reverse to improve visibility and operation control.
 - If visibility remains obstructed, enlist the help of a lookout or helper to guide you between obstacles and people.

---- Forklift Safety Tips: Sources ----

- (1) [Safe Operation of Forklifts and other powered industrial trucks \(PITs\), page 2](#) by [wisha-training.lni.wa.gov](#)
- (2) [FORKLIFT SAFETY AWARENESS](#) by [naw.org](#)