

# 20 Important Safety Tips for Forklifts

OSHA statistics indicate that there are roughly 85 forklift fatalities and 34,900 serious injuries each year, 42 percent of which come from the operator being crushed by a tipping vehicle ([ohsonline.com](http://ohsonline.com)). We can reduce those numbers by ensuring all of our warehouse workers are not only properly educated and trained to safely operate forklifts, but also to be refreshed on important safety details.

The Infographic



## 1 Operators must be qualified



Operating forklifts should only be done by individuals who have been trained properly and contain a license to operate the equipment.

## 2 Appropriate clothing must be worn



It needs to be ensured that operators wear the appropriate safety work wear; usually consisting of a hard hat, safety shoes and hi-visibility jackets. The work wear must be reasonably fitted as any loose clothing can get caught on machinery. Don't operate/hold any of the controls when your hands have grease on them; it may cause them to slide off and cause an accident.

## 3 Examine Equipment before use

Operators should do a routine check of the equipment before driving them. Some things you should check for any faults are brakes, steering, controls, warning devices, mast and tires. If there are any noted damages or problems management should be notified and the forklift should not be operated if it needs to be repaired. Always consider the 'journey's end' of a load before picking it up. A convenient position of a load from pick-up may not be convenient for stacking.



## 4 Starting up the forklift

For safety purposes, it's important for the operator to make use of the steps and hand grabs to seat themselves correctly in the forklift. Before starting the forklift it's important to ensure all the equipment's controls are in reach and the seat position and mirrors are adjusted to the operator's needs. The operator should not start the forklift until they are correctly seated with their safety belt fastened and all parts of their body are safely inside the confines of the operators cabin or the forklift.

## 5 Consider the surrounding environment



Whilst operating a forklift you must pay attention and follow any work site rules and guidelines. The operator must only drive the equipment in the machinery's designated roadways. Observe all signs, especially those on maximum permitted floor loadings and clearance heights. Be aware of the height of the load, mast and overhead guard of the forklift when entering or exiting buildings. Be careful when operating a forklift near the edge of a loading dock or ramp - the forklift can fall over the edge - keep a safe distance from the edge. Do not operate on bridge plates, unless they can support the weight of the forklift and load.

## 6 Operate at a safe speed

Never proceed past the speed limit. Take corners and any turns slowly to minimize risk of tipping. Make any changes in direction or any stops gradually and slowly.



## 7 Avoid Hazards

Steer clear of any bumps or uneven ground surfaces along with slippery conditions. Steer clear of loose ground objects which could cause loss of control over the equipment or a load to move around. Use the horn when closing in on a corner or doorway/entrance and around people to alert pedestrians or other forklift operators of your whereabouts to avoid any unnecessary collision. Keep a safe distance from other trucks in case they move in an unpredictable manner. Forklift training course Make sure that you always have enough space to stop safely.

## 8 Ensure your load is stable and secure

Check the loads carefully before moving them for stability and damage. It is important to ensure that the load is tilted back with the forks sitting low whilst transporting in order to increase truck stability. Check for any overhead objects before lifting or stacking loads. Do not lift or move loads that are not safe or stable. Make sure loads are correctly stacked and positioned across both forks. Stack the load on the pallet or skid safely and correctly. Use securing measures such as ropes or bindings if required.

## 9 Make sure you have clear visibility



Operate the forklift in reverse when it improves visibility; except when moving up ramps. It is important to make sure you can see the racking clearly in which you are positioning your load. If visibility is poor do not continue driving; in some circumstances you may need a lookout helper to assist you.

## 10 Forklifts are for Carrying Loads only

Operators must not let others ride on the equipment unless another seat is fitted safely to the forklift for a second person. If a person has to be lifted, use only a securely attached work platform and cage and follow the appropriate operating instructions.

## 11 Keep Clear of the Mast

Do not authorize anyone to stand or walk under the load or forklift machinery - The load can fall causing injury or death. Keep hands and feet clear of the cross members of the mast - Serious injury can be caused if the mast is lowered while your hand is on it.



## 12 Driving on Ramps

When driving up ramps move in a forward direction and down ramps in reverse, especially while carrying loads. Do not load or unload goods or turn whilst on a ramp.

## 13 Ensure the forklift is not Over-loaded

Do not use the tip of the forks as a lever to raise a heavy load. Do not push a load with the tip of the forks. Know the capacity of your forklift and any attachments being used and never exceed this capacity. An overload can cause the rear tires to be raised off the ground and may cause the forklift to tip over.

## 14 Ensure the Load is evenly distributed

Do not lift or move a load unless both forks are fully under the load. Do not lift a load with one fork. Use pallets and skids that can withstand the weight of the load. Do not use damaged, deformed or decayed pallets for holding loads.

## Refueling 15

A forklift should only be refueled at specially designated locations. Switch off the forklift. For IC engine forklifts, no open flame or sparks are permitted, and refueling should take place in a well-ventilated area.



## When the Shift Ends 16

After use ensure the forklift is parked in a designated or authorized area. Fully lower the forks to the floor and apply the park brake. Turn the forklift "off" and remove the key. Do not leave a forklift running whilst unattended.

## 17 Inspecting A Forklift

Prior to using a forklift, OSHA requires that every forklift undergo a pre-operation inspection. The pre-operation inspection involves an initial visual check with the key off, and then an operational check when the engine is running. Any defective forklifts should be taken out of service immediately, and a supervisor notified. ([osha.gov](http://osha.gov))

## 18 Refueling A Forklift

1. Park the forklift in the designated refueling area.
2. Place the transmission in Neutral.
3. Lower the forks to the ground.
4. Engage the parking brake.
5. Shut off the engine.
6. Open the filler cap.
7. Fill the tank slowly (if spillage occurs, wipe off fuel and wash down the area with water).
8. Close the filler cap. ([osha.gov](http://osha.gov))



## Stability and Loads 19

In order for forklifts to remain balanced and to prevent them from tipping over, there must be an established center of gravity. It's important to understand why forklifts become unstable so that preventative measures can be taken. Our friends over at OSHA have broken down exactly how to measure center of gravity, as well as everything you need to know about load composition.



## Pedestrians 20

Employers and supervisors can do their part to maintain safety in the warehouse by:

- Separating the pedestrian and forklift traffic by creating designated walkways or travel ways.
- Restricting people from entering areas where the forklift is operating.
- Ensuring the area is well lit and the area is clear.
- Not loading the forklift in a way that restricts the driver's viewing area. ([jitny.com](http://jitny.com))



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## Bottom Line

Forklifts are considered heavy machinery and any and all heavy machinery can be dangerous even when operated with utmost caution. Be knowledgeable and stay vigilant when operating a forklift. Get a 'feel' for the machine you're operating and encourage others to maintain safe operations around the equipment as well. It'll help your operation of the forklift and their ability to work around it be natural, seamless, and safe.