

Forklift Safety

How to operate forklift trucks safely?

- Use the forklift truck only for the purpose for which it was designed.
- Hold a high risk work license to operate a forklift truck or be an authorized trainee.
- Do not operate a forklift truck if you are fatigued.
- Wear a seatbelt where one is provided.
- Operate the forklift truck strictly in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.
- Ensure that loads are within the rated load capacity of the forklift truck. Carry loads as close to the ground as possible.
- Operate the forklift truck with the load placed fully against the truck carriage or back rest. The mast should be tilted sufficiently backward to safeguard the load.
- Maintain a clear view ahead and behind (via a correctly adjusted rear view mirror) and give clear indication of your intentions. Maintain a safe distance from other vehicles.
- Observe speed limits and ensure you can make a safe stop at any time. Avoid rapid acceleration, deceleration and quick turns.
- Drive carefully on wet or slippery surfaces or when pedestrians are near.
- Reduce speed when making a turn. Take care that the tip of the fork (or load) or the rear side of the forklift truck does not touch a nearby person or object.
- Drive in reverse if vision is obscured in front by a bulky load.
- Ensure that the load leads when driving up gradients. On gradients, tilt the mast back sufficiently to safeguard the load and raise the forks so they clear the ground.
- When travelling on an incline with no load, place the forks on the downhill side of the forklift truck.
- Before driving a forklift truck onto a truck, trailer or rail wagon, check that the brakes of the receiving vehicle are set and the wheels are chocked.
- Remove the ignition/starter switch key when you leave the forklift truck. Ensure the controls are in neutral, the power is shut off, the park brakes are applied and the forks fully lowered.
- Never park or leave the forklift in any doorway, entrance, emergency exit or in front of fire extinguishing equipment.

Safety Procedures

It is necessary that a safety operating procedure is implemented for every workplace device. These procedures should be regularly updated and made available to all staff via training sessions and resource manual.

What you should do:

Provide training and information for operators on all aspects of forklift truck operation and maintenance. Records of training sessions attended should be kept for each operator throughout their term of employment. Wear appropriate PPE for such activities as changing and charging batteries. Before starting each shift, conduct a thorough inspection of the forklift truck and attachments. Establish safety procedures for fuel handling and storage, battery changing and charging. Establish a method for determining the weights of loads being handled.

What not to do with and around forklifts

Employers and trained forklift truck operators should be aware of what not to do with and around forklifts. It is the responsibility of everyone in the workplace to ensure that these practices do not occur.

- A forklift truck must not be used as a towing or push device, unless appropriate attachments are fitted.
- A tow rope must never be attached to the mast to pull or drag loads.
- Unless of an authorized design, fork extensions should not be fitted.
- A person should not push on the point of one or both forks. Nor should a person stand or walk under the elevated forks, even when a load is not being carried.
- The backrest extension and overhead guard of the forklift truck should not be removed, unless specifically authorized.
- A forklift truck should not be left stationary, with the engine running, in confined spaces.
- A forklift truck must not be parked or stacked on an incline, or operated on gradients with the load elevated more than necessary.
- An operator's arms, hands, legs and head must not leave the confines of the cab or be placed between the uprights of the mast.
- A forklift should not cross railway lines, unless the lines are recessed into the surface; or be driven over a bridge plate, unless it is securely fixed and can support the total weight.
- There must be a strictly enforced no smoking policy in a refueling or battery charging area.
- Naked flames should not be used when checking the level of electrolyte in battery cells.

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Top 3 - What not to do:

#1: A forklift truck should never be left alone while the engine is running.

#2: Never start operation of forklift until safety belt is securely fastened.

#3: A passenger must never be carried or transported on the forklift or load.