



Basics of Forklift Safety

Your forklift drivers operate valuable machines that move valuable material. Unsafe operation can injure drivers, injure coworkers, damage forklifts, & damage material, which can lead to expenses, missed deadlines, delayed shipments, dissatisfied customers, & canceled orders. To reduce the chance of such mishaps, you should ensure your drivers are trained in safe forklift practices. This sheet shows some basic ideas of forklift safety; it is not an all-encompassing document. The National Safety Council, OSHA, or perhaps a local forklift seller or vocational school can provide full or refresher training for your workers.

Examples of safe forklift practices include:

- Slow down & sound horn more than once when approaching an intersecting aisle or doorway to warn coworkers & other forklift drivers of your approach (*people in noisy area and/or wearing hearing protection may need the extra warning*)
- Warn coworkers to beware of forklift traffic, walk in designated aisles, & look both ways at aisle intersections & doorways
- Equip forklifts with flashing lights & audible backup alarms
- Drive with forks as low as possible whether or not you have a load
- Instruct drivers to be mindful of surroundings so they do not strike objects
- Require drivers to wear safety belts
- Equip forklifts with overhead protection to protect drivers in case load or stock falls
- Make sure coworkers are clear as you place forks under a load, lift, drive, & place a load (*coworkers who are in the way may be crushed*)
- Do not attempt to lift loads that exceed the forklift's capacity
- Do not raise or lower loads enroute
- Drive backwards if load is so large that it obstructs your view
- Secure dockplates & chock trailer wheels before driving from dock into trailer
- Do not place extra weight on the back of forklift in attempt to counterbalance an overload
- Tilt back the load-engaging mechanism when driving on grades
- When climbing or going down steep grades, (*i.e. >10%*) keep load toward the upgrade
- Do not turn when driving on a ramp
- Do not transport passengers
- Do not lift coworkers unless forklift has an approved platform, equipped with guardrails, toeboards, a barrier between the platform and any potential pinch points and a positive means of securing the platform to the forklift.
- Equip diesel, gasoline, or LP-gas fueled forklifts with fire extinguishers; refuel outdoors
- Forbid smoking at electric forklift battery charging stations (*charging batteries generate hydrogen which can ignite & explode & splash employees with sulfuric acid*)
- Provide eye & face protection at battery charging stations to protect against battery explosion; provide eyewash in case battery explodes