

Basic Rules for Safe Travel

Handout

Overview

Forklifts are one type of powered industrial truck. Others include platform lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, tractors, and other trucks that are powered by an electric motor or internal combustion engine. Improper handling or misuse of forklifts often causes injuries.

OSHA requires operators to be trained. Before operating a forklift, you should understand the basic operating and loading rules, basic rules for safe travel, truck-related and workplace-related information, and how to perform a safety check.

Rules of the road

Most accidents happen while the truck is traveling. Follow these rules to travel safely:

- Watch where you are going. Drive in reverse with the load trailing if the load obstructs your view. Keep a clear view of your path and look in the direction you are traveling.
- Never drive up to anyone standing in front of a bench or other fixed object.
- Allow no riders. (If riders are authorized, the truck must provide them with a safe place to ride.)
- Always keep your arms or legs within the truck. Placing them between the uprights of the mast or outside the running lines of the truck is not allowed.
- Keep the load close to the ground while you drive. Raise the forks only as much as you need to so that you clear the road surface. Tilt the load back slightly to stabilize it against the backrest.
- Keep to the right where there is two-way traffic.
- Obey speed limits. Slow down for wet and slippery floors. Slow down for turns. Keep the forklift under control so you can stop it safely.
- Slow down and sound the horn at cross aisles and other locations where vision is obstructed.



- Maintain a safe distance of about three truck lengths from a truck that you are following.
- Do not pass a truck that is traveling in your same direction at intersections, blind spots, or other dangerous locations.
- Do not allow stunt driving or horseplay. And, avoid running over loose objects.
- Make sure you always have enough clearance under overhead installations (lights, pipes, sprinkler system, doorways, etc.)
- Stay within the rated capacity of dockboards and bridgeplates. Make sure they are secure before you drive on them. Keep a safe distance from the edge of any elevated dock, ramp, or platform.
- While using the forklift to load and unload trucks, trailers, or railroad cars, always set the brakes and use wheel blocks to keep the truck/trailer/rail car from moving. Use fixed jacks to support a semitrailer that is not coupled to a tractor. Check the floor for breaks and weaknesses before you drive the forklift inside. Do not use the truck to open or close freight doors.
- Follow special precautions from your employer when the forklift will be driven on slopes, across railroad tracks, and into elevators.

Remember, only properly trained employees can operate a forklift!

