



POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCK (FORKLIFT)

Forklifts save time and money, allowing heavy loads to be moved quickly and efficiently. They also help reduce the risk of accidents on a worksite as they reduce the amount of manual handling required. However, when not operated correctly, forklifts can become very dangerous and lead to serious injuries and fatalities.

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) estimates that forklifts are responsible for approximately 61,800 minor injuries, 34,900 serious injuries, and as many as 85 forklift-related deaths each year. With nearly 900,000 forklifts in active use across the country, this translates to a one in ten chance that each forklift at a construction site will be involved in an accident within the year. Overall, 1 out of every 6 workplace fatalities in the U.S. can be attributed to forklift-related incidents.

Forklift accidents are a serious safety concern in many workplaces, especially in warehouses, manufacturing plants, and construction sites. Here are 5 of the most common causes of forklift accident and how to prevent them:

1. Tip-overs and rollovers account for an estimated 42% of all recorded injuries and are caused by sudden movements, unsafe speeds and poorly balanced loads.

Prevention:

- a. Only operate on smooth, even surfaces. Uneven surfaces can cause sudden shifts in the center of gravity, resulting in tip-overs.
 - b. Understand load balance. Proper load balance is critical to maintaining a stable center of gravity. Weight should always be centered. Only drive when the forks are lowered; operating with an elevated load creates hazards.
 - c. Turn methodically and slowly. Turning a forklift shifts the center of gravity, which increases the risk of a tip-over, especially if you're moving too fast.
 - d. Don't exceed your load capacity. Maximum load capacities are printed on the data tag. Overloading your forklift can result in a tip-over.
2. Collisions with pedestrians account for approximately 36% of forklift-related deaths.

Prevention:

- a. Never approach a person standing in front of a stationary object. Crushing accidents are very common, which is why OSHA forbids driving up to a pedestrian standing against a wall, stack, or other immovable object.
- b. Use physical or symbolic barriers. By installing physical barriers or laying out cones, you can alert pedestrians of the hazardous area.

- c. Use warning lights and alarms. Flashing lights and backup alarms can alert pedestrians to potential dangers.
 - d. Follow posted speed limits and avoid distracted driving. Driver inattention is a huge factor in pedestrian collisions. Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.
- 3. Falling loads put both the operator and pedestrians at risk. Prevention:
 - a. Secure, center and bind down loads carefully.
 - b. Use load backrests and ensure loads are evenly distributed.
 - c. Do not operate a forklift with bent or damaged forks.
 - d. Avoid moving, lifting, or tilting the mast too abruptly or quickly.
- 4. Mechanical Failures. Prevention:
 - a. Implement a routine maintenance schedule.
 - b. Perform daily pre-use inspections
 - c. Immediately report and repair any issues
- 5. Poorly trained operators and operator error. Inadequate training can lead to operators not knowing how to handle the forklift safely, increasing the risk of accidents. Prevention:
 - a. Provide federally mandated training for all operators. OSHA requires a combination of formal (e.g., lecture, computer learning), practical and performance evaluations. Evaluations must be completed by employer to ensure competency and to be certified.
 - b. Conduct refresher courses as needed and performance evaluations at least once every three years.
 - c. Promote a safety-first culture with clear rules and consequences.
 - d. Encouraging operators to report unsafe conditions and near misses can help identify and address potential hazards proactively.

Safety begins with a trained operator. By implementing a comprehensive training program and fostering a strong safety culture, workplaces can significantly reduce the risk of forklift accidents and create a safer environment for all employees.

GCSC Resources

Safety Training: 6:00am – 3:00pm / Questions? csr@mygcsc.com

Powered Industrial Truck (Forklift) – O8PIT

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