



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 csr@mygcsc.com

Course Code	Course
08PIT	Powered Industrial Truck (Forklift)

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