

# How to help prevent forklift-related accidents and injuries.

OSHA requires that forklift operators be at least 18 years of age, properly trained and certified.



Powered industrial trucks, also known as forklifts or lift trucks, are vehicles that perform essential tasks in warehouses, factories and other facilities where materials need to be moved or lifted for storage. While a forklift is a quick and effective way to transport cargo, it's also a vehicle for which safe operation is extremely important.

## What's the risk to your business?

As a business owner, you're responsible for making sure your forklift operators are well qualified and that equipment is maintained and used as it should be. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) requires that anyone attempting to operate a powered industrial truck be at least 18 years of age, properly trained and certified to do so. When a forklift is misused, there's the potential for accidents that can result in damage to cargo and/or your facility, as well as injuries to your workers. Due to the ease with which they can overturn, forklifts should never be used for anything other than the operator's specified job. Under no circumstances should a forklift be used to carry passengers or elevate people without an approved safety platform.

Forklift Safety



**OSHA requires daily pre-shift inspections.**

According to OSHA, a forklift should be inspected at the beginning of each workday to make sure it's equipped to perform properly. Any sign of a malfunction or poor performance with the forklift should be reported to a supervisor immediately. Here are a few things every forklift driver should consider before getting behind the wheel:

- Ensure the lift appears clean and in good condition with no signs of leaks, damp spots or drips under the equipment
- Check the area around and above the forks for obstructions that could cause an accident once the forklift is started
- Look for nearby access to a charged fire extinguisher
- Note the surrounding terrain and the path that the forklift will travel to observe surface condition, slope, clearance space or other hazards
- Test the braking mechanism, warning lights and horn

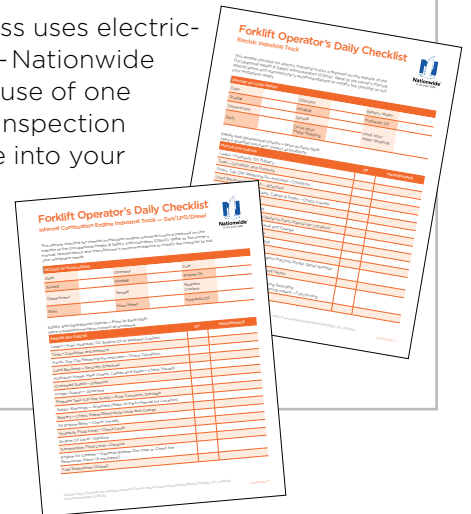
There are generally two types of forklifts: electric (battery) powered and internal combustion engine (gas/LPG/diesel) powered. See the box below for information about pre-shift checklists featured on the OSHA website and available from Nationwide® that you may want to introduce in your workplace.

Any sign of a malfunction or poor performance with a forklift should be reported to a supervisor immediately.

**OSHA checklists for electric- and gas-powered forklifts.<sup>1</sup>**

Depending on whether your business uses electric- or gas-powered forklifts – or both – Nationwide encourages you to incorporate the use of one or both of the OSHA-created daily inspection procedures checklists pictured here into your business's loss control program.

Ask your agent or your Nationwide Loss Control Services representative for form number CMO-4000AO (for electric) and/or CMO-0479AO (for gas).



<sup>1</sup> Sample Daily Checklists for Powered Industrial Trucks, [https://www.osha.gov/dte/library/pit/daily\\_pit\\_checklist.html](https://www.osha.gov/dte/library/pit/daily_pit_checklist.html) (downloaded 7/28/16).

## Forklift Safety

### When the forklift is ready to roll.

With your driver's pre-shift inspection completed, the focus on safety continues as the forklift is loaded, transports its cargo and is unloaded at its final destination.

#### LOADING

Because a top-heavy forklift can easily topple, it should not be used to carry more than its intended load. Larger loads should always be split into smaller loads, when appropriate, and some other tips for operators to keep in mind when loading cargo onto a forklift are:

- Check the forklift's nameplate to validate its maximum load capabilities; the weight limit should never be exceeded
- Choose the proper lift fixture according to the type of load being carried, such as a carpet spike, drum grapple or forks; forks should be spread as wide as possible for even load distribution
- Always use a safety belt when operating the forklift
- Drive the forks under the load until it slightly touches the forklift carriage; The forks should then be tilted back so the weight of the load shifts back, making it more stable
- If a load is loose or uneven, tie it down and secure it

#### CARRYING

Once the forklift has been loaded, safety procedures should continue as it carries the load to its final destination. During this time, your operator should:

- When moving, keep the forks slightly above the ground and tilted back; this will help avoid potential ground hazards and keep the forklift from being top heavy
- When going down inclines, go in reverse and when going up inclines, go forward; this will help keep the load stable
- Keep a clear line of sight by either traveling in reverse or using a ground spotter if the load blocks your view
- Do not raise or lower the load while moving
- Always keep arms and legs inside the lift and never reach through the mast to adjust a load
- Observe standard traffic rules and obey any posted traffic speeds
- Blow the horn at blind corners as a warning
- Give pedestrians the right of way in warehouse situations
- Keep your hands clean and dry
- Never block emergency exit doors or emergency equipment



A top-heavy forklift can easily topple and should not be used to carry more than its intended load.

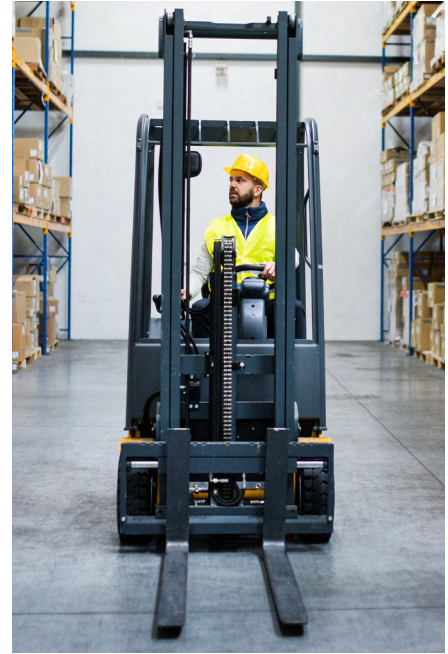
Questions? Contact  
Nationwide Loss Control  
Services: 1-866-808-2101  
or [LCS@nationwide.com](mailto:LCS@nationwide.com).

## Forklift Safety

**UNLOADING**

Once the load has reached its final destination, here are a few safety measures that can help prevent accidents while unloading cargo:

- **Before unloading onto a truck**, confirm the rear wheels of the truck are chocked, the brakes are locked and the dock plate is secure; also, be sure the truck can support the weight of both the forklift and the load
- **If unloading onto a stack**, position the forklift and check overhead clearances for any obstructions before the forks are lifted
- **When raising and lowering cargo**, always keep the load tilted back; once the load is in its final position, tilt the load forward, lower it, level the forks and slowly pull the forks back
- **After unloading**, check behind the forklift before backing up, sound the back-up alarm and slowly back away
- **Once clear from backing**, stop the forklift and lower the forks to several inches off the ground before proceeding

**Some cases that call for extra precautions.**

When using a gas forklift indoors, operators need to make sure there's adequate ventilation and be aware of the hazards of carbon monoxide. Because it's odorless, your workers can be overcome without knowing something is wrong. If they feel weak, sleepy or dizzy, they need to turn off the forklift and get fresh air immediately.

Electric-powered forklifts used in areas containing explosive or flammable concentrations of fumes or dust, must be designed to prevent the operation of the equipment from igniting the atmosphere. In its rating of the various types of industrial trucks, UL (Underwriters Laboratories) has established that only Type EX forklifts are so designed, constructed and assembled that they may be used in atmospheres containing flammable vapors, dusts and, under certain conditions, fibers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Industrial Lift Truck Classifications*, <http://www.liftomatic.com/pdf/forklift-classifications.pdf> (downloaded 7/28/16).

When raising and lowering cargo, the forklift operator should always keep the load tilted back.

Providing solutions to help our members manage risk.<sup>®</sup>



For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or [LCS@nationwide.com](mailto:LCS@nationwide.com).