Forklift Safety – Blind Spots Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Forklifts might not move fast, but their blind spots are big – and the consequences of a missed detail can be devastating. Whether you're backing up, turning a corner, or carrying a tall load, there are areas around the machine where visibility drops to zero. That's where workers get hit, pinned, or crushed. And it's not just pedestrians at risk – operators can get seriously injured too if they misjudge space or miss an obstacle. One blind spot. One moment of inattention. That's all it takes to turn a routine task into a life-changing accident.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Forklifts have large, built-in blind spots – and when visibility drops, risk skyrockets. These machines are heavy, hard to stop quickly, and often operate in tight, busy areas. Whether you're driving or working nearby, a blind spot can turn deadly in seconds.

Rear and Side Blind Spots – Where Visibility Disappears

Forklift operators often can't see what's directly behind or beside them, especially when backing up or turning.

- A fully raised load can block the view entirely
- Racks, corners, and other equipment can hide pedestrians or obstacles
- Mirrors help, but they don't show everything – and they get dirty or misaligned

Obstructed Forward View – High Loads, Low Awareness

When a tall pallet or bulky material is carried in front, the operator may have to lean or twist to see – or worse, drive in reverse.

- Driving blind over ramps, through doorways, or near ledges is a serious hazard
- Operators may not see workers crouched down or walking close to the forks

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Avoiding blind spot incidents with forklifts comes down to three key things: visibility, communication, and situational awareness. Whether you're the one behind the wheel or working nearby, these habits save lives.

Make Visibility a Priority – See and Be Seen

Never assume you're visible just because you're nearby. Operators should:

- Use mirrors and cameras – but also physically lean and look around corners.
- Drive in reverse only if your forward view is blocked – and only when it's safe to do so.
- Keep loads low while moving so the forward view remains clear.

Tip: If your line of sight is blocked by the load, stop and reassess. Don't guess – reposition the load or ask for a spotter. One blind drive through a busy zone is all it takes for tragedy.

Use Spotters and Ground Rules – It's a Two-Way Street

Workers on foot should never assume the driver sees them.

- Maintain eye contact with the operator before walking near the machine.
- Follow designated walkways and marked routes.
- Operators should honk before reversing, rounding corners, or entering intersections.
- When in tight or high-traffic areas, use a trained spotter – not just a coworker waving you on.

Maintain Safe Zones – Respect the Danger Bubble

Forklifts need space. Never stand, walk, or work within 3 feet (1 meter) of a moving forklift.

- Keep clear of turning zones and loading areas – even for "just a second."
- Don't approach a forklift until the operator has stopped, lowered the forks, and made eye contact.

Stay Sharp and Stick to Protocols

Fatigue, distractions, and shortcuts make blind spots even more dangerous.

- Slow down in tight areas – speed reduces reaction time.
- Report poor lighting, blocked views, or missing mirrors immediately.
- Always wear high-visibility gear – it makes a real difference.

Example: You're about to walk behind a parked forklift. It's off – or so it seems. But the operator's still in the cab, and the engine restarts. If you didn't make eye contact or stay out of the rear blind spot, you're at serious risk. Never assume. Always confirm.

FINAL WORD

Forklifts don't need speed to cause serious harm – all it takes is a blind spot

and a bad decision. Whether you’re operating or walking nearby, stay alert, make eye contact, and give the machine space.