Operating a Forklift Requires Training



Forklifts are the workhorses of the warehouse. For those workers who move materials with handcarts, operating a forklift can look like a ticket to easy street. But although forklifts can move huge quantities of materials in a work day, they are also a major safety hazard as they weave their heavy loads around workers and stacked materials.

Forklift safety is an essential part of warehouse and housekeeping safety. A forklift incident can easily injure its driver, as well as workers who share floor space with forklifts. That’s why it’s extremely important for forklift operators to adhere to strict safety practices.

Be aware of the safety practices associated with the job you need to perform. If you are at all unsure, talk to your supervisor.

We are all aware of the first rule of forklift safety: Do not operate a forklift unless you are trained and certified as a forklift operator. And since you have already checked the mechanical and structural status of your forklift, as you do every day, your next consideration should be the characteristics of each load you will carry.

Is the load secure? Is the pallet structurally sound? Is it within the forklift’s load capacity? A tipped load can seriously injure a coworker. The result of transporting a load which is heavier than what your forklift is designed for is never worth the risk.

When lifting a load, remember to always position the forks so the load is evenly distributed and will not destabilize the forklift. Do not add extra weight to the load for stability. It’s always best to restack the load. Keep the forklift’s mast in a vertical position with a slight tilt backward and lift the load only to a height that will prevent the skid from dragging. If on uneven ground you may have to lift the load slightly higher. Also take note of overhead clearances. If in doubt, measure the height of the clearances.

Before beginning to move your load, test your familiarity with the route you will be taking. Try to imagine the route in your mind. If you have difficulty picturing the route, then you are probably not sufficiently familiar with it. You should consider walking the route to check for obstacles, obstructions, traffic concentrations and overhead clearances that will pose a safety threat.

While transporting your load, do not exceed safe operating speeds. Because of the truck’s increased weight, the distance it takes to stop the truck will be greater than when the truck is without a load.

And most importantly, always keep an eye out for pedestrians. Workers on foot are at a considerable disadvantage. When a pedestrian crosses your route, stop the truck and wait for them to finish crossing. Do not begin moving again until the route is clear. Most incidents between forklifts and pedestrians occur when the driver and pedestrian are not aware of each other. Communication is essential.

Remember to report any close calls or incidents which occur while you are operating the forklift. And if you have any doubts as to the safety of the load, the route, or the truck you are operating, talk to your supervisor.

Operating any forklift in any environment requires you stay on top of your strong safety practices. It’s a million times better than being at the bottom of any load.