CrewSigned

Forklift Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Forklifts are heavy, they turn sharply, and the operator cannot see everything around them. Every year forklift accidents kill and seriously injure workers, both operators and the people walking nearby. Today we are covering the rules for both groups.

If you are not trained and evaluated on a forklift, you do not drive it. That includes moving it a few feet to get it out of the way. Training is specific to the type of truck and the conditions where we use it, and operators get re-evaluated at least every three years, or sooner after an accident or a near miss. Nobody under eighteen operates a forklift.

Operators, start every shift with a check. Look at the tires, forks, chains, mast, horn, lights, brakes, steering and seat belt, and check for leaks. If something is wrong, tag it out and report it.

Wear the seat belt every time. Tip-overs are the leading cause of forklift deaths, and operators are often crushed by the overhead guard when they try to jump clear. If the truck starts to tip, stay in the seat, hold on tight, brace your feet and lean away from the direction it is falling.

Keep loads low, about four to six inches off the ground when traveling, and tilted back. Do not lift more than the rated capacity. If a load blocks your view, drive in reverse and look where you are going, or use a spotter. Slow down at corners and sound the horn at intersections and blind spots. On ramps, keep the load pointed uphill. Never give anyone a ride, and never lift a person on the forks or on a pallet.

Pedestrians, assume the operator does not see you. Make eye contact before you cross in front of a forklift. Stay out of marked forklift lanes when you can, keep clear of the back end because it swings wide when turning, and never walk or stand under raised forks.

When the forklift is parked, the forks go flat on the ground, the controls are in neutral, the brake is set and the key is out.

Everyone, if you see someone operating a forklift unsafely, speak up or tell me. These machines do not give second chances.

Discussion questions

1. Who here is trained and evaluated to drive each type of forklift we use?
2. Where are the blind corners and busy crossings on this site where pedestrians and forklifts meet?
3. If a forklift started to tip over, what should the operator do?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1910.178, Powered industrial trucks
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.178

SOURCES

Forklift Safety QuickCard (OSHA 3949): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3949.pdf
Protect Workers Operating and Working Near Forklifts: OSHA Alert (OSHA 3973): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3973.pdf
NIOSH, Preventing Injuries and Deaths of Workers Who Operate or Work Near Forklifts: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/2001-109.html
OSHA Safety and Health Topics, Powered Industrial Trucks: https://www.osha.gov/powered-industrial-trucks

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC
Forklift Safety Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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