Working Safely Around Forklifts Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Forklift vehicles are not like automobiles; they're about twice as heavy, due to the counterbalance weight needed to carry large loads. To avoid becoming a victim of a forklift accident, be constantly aware of the forklift activities around you in your immediate work areas.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

FORKLIFT ACCIDENT COMMON FACTORS

1. **Speeding** – Forklift operators use excessive speed which cause major incidents such as running over people.
2. **Moving while the load is elevated** – the fork should stay on rest to safely move between destinations while carrying a load. This will allow the operator to have better visibility and control.
3. **Unaware pedestrians** –Pedestrians are also in charge of their own safety and shouldn't rely on vehicle operators when it's safer and easier for a person to move away.
4. **Loads that exceed the weight limit** – This cannot only cause damage to the forklift but also cause major accidents such as forklift overturns.
5. **Other improper driving methods** – Properly trained forklift operators should be knowledgeable on how to turn, back up, and use the brakes.

OTHER FACTOR THAT CONTRIBUTES TO FORKLIFT ACCIDENTS

Jumping out of the forklift – There is a high chance of fatality whenever a forklift operator attempts to jump out of the forklift in accidents such as forklift tipping over.

Crowded pathway – Facilities should have enough space for a forklift to maneuver on. This space should be big enough for a forklift operator to back out off and change directions.

Inspection and maintenance of forklifts – Daily inspections are required to help keep forklift operations safe and in compliance with regulations. Inspections must be conducted by the operator before and after their shifts.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST SAFETY GUIDELINES TO AVOID FORKLIFT ACCIDENTS

1. Forklift Certification Requirement. It is strongly recommended that only those who are trained and licensed in accordance with OSHA standards operate a forklift. Employers should evaluate their employees' performance at least once every three years and supplement training with forklift safety videos, lectures, software training and demonstrations.

2. Wear Proper PPE. Forklift operators should be dressed with the appropriate safety equipment, including safety shoes, hard-hats and a high-visibility jacket.

3. Know the Forklift Class. OSHA recognizes many different forklift types and classifications. Each type has its own structure, weight limit, traveling speed, turning radius and usage.

4. Inspect the Equipment Daily. Thoroughly inspect forklifts before every use and on a daily basis. A safety forklift checklist is as follows:

- Test operating controls such as brakes, lights, horn, and steering wheel.
- Check mast and overhead guard for damage.
- Examine tire and fluid levels (hydraulic, brake, engine, fuel, and coolant).
- Check for water, oil or radiator leaks.
- Ensure the forks are in good condition (e.g. straight, no cracks, no distortion).
- Look for potential hazards.

5. Maintain 360° Visibility. Keep forks low to the ground to provide clear forward visibility. If the load restricts your visibility, operate the equipment in reverse. Other best practices are:

- Always make eye contact with pedestrians and workers.
- Always look in the direction of travel
- Use rear-view mirrors to boost visibility.
- Use headlights if working at night, outdoors, or in areas where additional lighting is needed.

6. Implement a Floor Marking System. A floor marking system can help increase worker safety. Use yellow to mark physical hazards, such as areas prone to falling or stumbling, and red to delineate fire hazards, fire equipment and emergency switches. Place way finders and signs throughout the site to keep pedestrians away from forklift paths, lead forklifts along safe routes, and improve the overall flow of traffic.

7. Maintain Equipment Capacity. Know the capacity of your forklift and any attachments used. Avoid hauling weight that exceeds the counterweight of the forklift.

8. Never Carry Passengers. Do not allow workers to ride on the forklift unless a second seat is fitted.

9. Pay Attention to the Forklift Center of Gravity. Forklifts are built on a three-point suspension system, called the "stability triangle" that operators must stay within to prevent it from tipping over. The heavier the load, the further out the center of gravity is from the load center, decreasing your forklift's lifting capacity.

10. Ensure Loads are Stable and Secure. When placing loads on the loading dock, be sure to check them for balance. Travel with the load tilted backward and keep forks as low as possible to increase the stability of the equipment, especially when navigating on ramps.

11. Move at the Designated Speed Limits. Drive your forklift within the designated speed limits. It’s important to not stop, turn, change directions suddenly, or move fast when making sharp turns, as these actions can cause the forklift to tip over. Experts recommend staying in the vehicle, gripping the wheel, and bracing your feet.

12. Maintain a Safe Operating Distance. Do not operate a forklift in close proximity to other machinery. Keep a safe distance to allow you room to stop safely.

13. Avoid Hazardous Areas of the Equipment. Avoid standing or walking under a load, lifting mechanism, or forklift attachment, as loads can fall off on anyone positioned below it.

14. Refuel and Recharge the Forklift. It’s important to keep equipment fully charged and fueled. Be sure to recharge and refuel in specially designated locations, which are usually well-ventilated and flame-free areas.

15. Park the Forklift at the End of the Shift. At the end of the shift, be sure to always park the equipment in the designated and authorized areas. Make sure the parking areas do not block pathways or obstruct any exits or entrances. Fully lower the forks until they fit the floor, apply the parking brake, turn off the engine, and remove the key from the ignition.

FINAL WORD

The list of possible forklift hazards can be a long one depending on the work environment and the specific work tasks being performed. Treat forklifts with respect and never become complacent to the very real hazards their operation presents.