



Minnesota Electrical Association

Electrical Toolbox Talks

Fork Lift Drivers

The average fork lift weighs twice as much as a car. With a weight of 6,000 pounds and a capacity load of 16,000-pound load, tremendous damage can occur should a collision occur with a person or an object.

1. Employer requires all drivers to attend training.
2. Employer provides specific safety training for employees who work around fork lifts.
3. Only authorized employees who are fully trained and tested can drive fork lifts. Authorized employees must know:
 - safe and defensive driving rules
 - safety inspections
 - understand the correct uses of the equipment
 - how to maintain, clean, and secure the equipment
4. Drivers must comply with the following rules for operating fork lifts:
 - Drive defensively.
 - Watch for overhead obstructions when lifting a load or when moving a load.
 - Keep to the right, signal turns, and obey all speed limits.
 - Cross railroad tracks at an angle other than a right angle.
 - Slow down at all intersections, and honk at blind intersections.
 - When parking, make sure you are in a safe place where people will not need to move the lift or run into it accidentally. Make sure the forks are lowered, set the brakes, put it in neutral, shut the power off, and remove the key or plug. Never park on an incline, but if you must, then block the wheels carefully.
 - Stay alert, never move with a load blocking your view, and always know the direction of your forks. Avoid oil and grease spots. Avoid edges on loading docks.
 - Pedestrians always have the right-of-way.
 - Keep a buffer space of three vehicle lengths between you and other vehicles.
 - No horse play. Never pass another vehicle in narrow aisles. Never race lifts. Travel slowly and do not make sudden turns. Fork lifts will tip if sudden turns are made at high speeds. Fork lifts are extremely dangerous when they tip.
 - Riders, towing, or pushing are not allowed.
 - Keep arms and legs inside the fork lift at all times.

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Fork Lift Drivers

(continued)

- Wear personal protective equipment when required such as restraining belts.
- When going from bright areas to dim areas, give your eyes time to adjust so you can see clearly before driving.
- Always set the brake and block the wheels of any lift or vehicle being loaded or unloaded.
- Always be sure you stop completely before raising or lowering a load. Never travel with a load raised high. Never travel with unloaded forks more than six inches off of the floor.
- Make sure the load is balanced securely on the forks. When lifting pallets, make sure the fork lifts are all the way in and tilt the mast back for stability before moving. Do not move loads on broken pallets.
- Know the weight limits of your vehicle, and never lift loads heavier than the capacity of the lift or loads that are not well balanced.
- When unloading, tilt the mast forward slightly.
- When driving on an incline, drive forward up the ramp and use reverse gear when driving down the ramp. This will avoid tipping forward.
- Only do the maintenance and repair work you are trained and authorized to do.
- Check your vehicle before using, and do not drive if anything malfunctions.
- Make sure your break pedal holds the lift solidly and does not slip under pressure.
- Make sure your emergency, parking and/or seat brake are working properly and will hold. Check the clutch.
- With the engine running:
 - Make sure your steering wheel doesn't feel loose or squeal and that the wheel turns properly both ways to its stops.
 - Check to make sure the hour meter, head, tail and warning lights are all operating.
 - Make sure the fork pins are in place.
 - Check cowling and body parts looking for anything that is loose, broken, or worn including tires for amount of wear.
 - Check the oil pressure gauge, water temperature, ammeter, horn, air cleaner, fan belt, hydraulic fluid level, battery water, fuel, oil level, radiator water, hydraulic controls, and other controls.
 - Check the hour meter, record it, and report the need for maintenance when it's time.
 - If anything is not right, do not drive the vehicle. Report it to maintenance immediately.

Notes:

For more information see OSHA 29 CFR 1910.178, manufacturer's guidelines, a competent safety professional or the OSHA Consulting office.

These rules are samples only. Each employee is responsible for working with his/her employees to write rules that meet the specific needs of their individual company and type of work. Each employer is responsible for assessing the accuracy of their rules and keeping them up to date. OSHA requires a minimum of an update and employee re-training annually.