

Forklift Safety toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Forklift Safety.

Forklifts save time and money, allowing you to move heavy loads quickly and efficiently. They also help reduce the risk of accidents on a worksite as they reduce the amount of manual handling required.

However, when not operated correctly, forklifts can become very dangerous and lead to a range of injuries from mild bumps and scrapes to more serious injuries like broken bones. To help make your worksite safer, we have put together this forklift safety toolbox talk.

Why Run a Forklift Safety Toolbox Talk?

- Ensures you know how to safely operate a forklift
- Helps you to be more aware of hazards while operating a forklift
- Gives you tips for how to minimize risks when operating a forklift
- Ensures we all know our responsibilities to maintain a safe workplace (including management)
- Safety improves productivity

Forklift Safety Practices

These are some common safety rules you must be aware of and follow when operating a forklift:

- Always wear a seat belt when operating a forklift—accidents do happen.
- When you are operating a forklift on inclines, ensure that the load is on the uphill side of the incline. When driving with a load, make sure you drive forward when going up the incline and backward when going down the incline.
- When driving the forklift without a load, make sure the forks are kept four to six inches off the ground

- Make sure no one walks underneath a raised load.
- Never go around a blind corner before checking first and use the horn when necessary.
- When carrying a high load that blocks your vision, drive the forklift in reverse and turn your head around so you can see.
- When operating around other forklifts, try to keep your distance from each other (about 3 forklift lengths).
- Never drive up behind someone unaware you are there.
- When you park a forklift or leave it unattended, make sure the forks are flat on the ground, the controls set to neutral, and the parking brake is on.

How to Properly Operate a Forklift

Let's put what we have discussed into action. Here is an example of what to do when operating a forklift to ensure you and your co-workers stay safe.

Preparation

Before you pick up a load make, sure that:

- The load is securely arranged and stable.
- The load should not be damaged in any way or the wrapping ripped.
- Make sure the weight of the load is centered. If it cannot be centered, you'll need to be extra careful when moving it.
- The heaviest part of the load should be placed on first/closest to the forklift's front wheels.
- Make sure the forklift isn't overloaded—check the stated capacity for the forklift you're operating.
- When necessary, use the load extension backrest.

Approaching the Load

Once you know the load is safe, you then need to safely get in the forklift, and when approaching the load, make sure you:

- Drive up to the load and stop about 8 to 12 inches in front of it.
- Make sure you are squarely in front of the load and that the forks are at the right height.
- Set direction control to neutral.
- Make sure that you don't raise or lower the forks unless the brake is on.

Fork Position

Now that you're in position, make sure that:

- The forks are level before inserting them into the pallet.
- The forks are placed as far under the load as possible.
- When you slide the forks into the pallet, make sure they are fully under the load. The forks need to be at minimum two-thirds the length of the load you are lifting.
- Make sure the weight of the load is centered between the forks and distributed as evenly as possible. You can also tilt the mast back to stabilize the load.

Lifting the Load

Once the forks are in place, it's time to lift the load. Before doing so, make sure that:

- You check whether there is enough space overhead for the load after you lift it.
- You can then carefully lift the load up—about 4 inches above the lower stack.
- When you lift the load, tilt the mast back slightly so you can rest the load against the backrest extension.
- Finally, slowly put the lift control lever into the neutral position.

Once you've successfully lifted the load, move it to its destination safely—adhering to the safety tips outlined above.

Key Takeaways

- Safety first. This means looking out for yourself and your co-workers.
- Make sure you're prepared and aware of the risks before operating a forklift.
- Be careful when lifting a load—use the correct techniques.
- Drive safely.
- Remember forklift safety is for everybody on the worksite!

[See all our toolbox talk topics here](#)