

# Forklift Safety toolbox talk

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



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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.
- Make sure you have complete forklift training before using.
- Make eye contact with people around you.

## 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!*

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