

Maintaining Forklifts for Safety and Compliance

Forklift Operational Hazards

Forklifts, or lift trucks, can be used to raise, lower, move or remove large objects or groups of smaller objects stored on pallets, or in boxes, crates, and other containers. The hazards associated with operating powered industrial trucks differ depending on the vehicle type. For example, because a sit-down, counterbalanced, high lift rider truck can lift loads much higher than motorized hand trucks, they're more likely to be involved in falling load accidents. Workplace conditions also present unique operational hazards. For example, retail establishments with warehouse environments often face greater challenges keeping pedestrians safe.



Forklift Recommended Inspection and Maintenance Practices:

The OSHA powered industrial truck standard (**29 CFR 1910.178**) lists the conditions under which a forklift is required to be removed from service. If operators notice these conditions while driving, they must stop, park, and get assistance.

Recommended Vehicle Inspection Practices

- Keep industrial truck in clean condition, free of lint, excess oil, and grease. – **29 CFR 1910.178(q)(10)**
- Defects when found must be immediately reported and corrected. – **29 CFR 1910.178(q)(7)**
- Any vehicle that emits hazardous sparks or flames from the exhaust system shall immediately be removed from service, and not returned to service until the cause for the emission of such sparks and flames has been eliminated. – **29 CFR 1910.178(q)(8)**
- When the temperature of any part of a truck is found to be in excess of its normal operating temperature, thus creating a hazardous condition, the vehicle shall be removed from service and not returned to service until the cause for such overheating has been eliminated. – **29 CFR 1910.178(q)(9)**
- No truck shall be operated with a leak in the fuel system until the leak has been corrected.

Recommended Preventative Maintenance Practices

- Perform preventive maintenance according to manufacturer's scheduled recommendations.
- Never operate a vehicle that requires maintenance or is in any way unsafe. – **29 CFR 1910.178(p)(1)**
- Remove from service any powered industrial truck not in safe operating condition. All repairs must be made by authorized personnel. Do not attempt to fix it yourself unless you are trained and authorized to do so. – **29 CFR 1910.178(q)(1)**
- Use non-combustible agents for cleaning trucks.
- High flash point (at or above 100° F) solvents may be used. Do not use low flash point (below 100° F) solvents.
- Take recommended precautions regarding toxicity, ventilation and fire hazards.

Training Requirements

The standard requires employers to develop and implement a training program based on the general principles of safe truck operation, the types of vehicle(s) being used in the workplace, the hazards of the workplace created by the use of the vehicle(s), and the general safety requirements of the OSHA standard.

Trained operators must know how to do the job properly and do it safely as demonstrated by workplace evaluation. Formal (lecture, video, etc.) and practical (demonstration and practical exercises) training must be provided. Employers must also certify that each operator has received the training and evaluate each operator at least once every three years. Prior to operating the truck in the workplace, the employer must evaluate the operator's performance and determine the operator to be competent to operate a powered industrial truck safely.



Refresher training is needed whenever an operator demonstrates a deficiency in the safe operation of the truck. Training shall consist of a combination of formal instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning, video tape, written material), practical training (demonstrations performed by the trainer and practical exercises performed by the trainee), and evaluation of the operator's performance in the workplace.

– 29 CFR 1910.178(l)(2)(ii).

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