Don’t Treat Forklifts Lightly

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Many forklift injuries are received by people working or walking around forklifts in operation. Incident rates go down and productivity goes up when forklift operators are correctly trained. Learn safe driving practices, loading procedures and proper maintenance to prevent injuries and incidents.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Operating a forklift incorrectly can be hazardous. Speeding, restricted vision and failure to yield can lead to injuries. Sudden braking can tip the forklift or drop the materials you are transporting. Unmanageable or unstable loads can cause a forklift to overturn.

EXAMPLE

A forklift operator is driving with his forks up and fails to sound his horn when he turns a corner. He hits a fellow worker, knocking him unconscious.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Driving a forklift requires special skills and practice. Use common sense and be aware of special considerations. These tips will help lighten your hazard load:

- Inspect your forklift before each shift. Check tires for damage and correct air pressure. Test your brakes, warning signals and lights. Ensure the steering turns in both directions to a full lock. Check the lifting system to make sure it’s working correctly. Make sure the mast is not broken or cracked. Check for adequate fuel, water, oil and a fully charged battery.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE), including hardhat and safety footwear. Additional PPE will be required depending on the work environment and the cargo being handled.
- Use the right forklift for the job. Consider the location, capacity limits, potential hazards and the load requirement.

Never lift loads overhead unless the forklift is fitted with an overhead guard.

- Always drive carefully. Don’t speed, and make sure to sound your horn at corners and danger spots. Stop before all doorways. Follow the common traffic pattern by keeping to the right of an aisle. Never carry passengers. Use caution when driving and loading around pedestrians ? they always have the right of way!
- To avoid the danger of overturning when carrying a load, keep the forks close to the ground and the mast tilted back.
- Drive cautiously on hills and inclines, and make sure to always look in the direction of travel. Drive an unloaded forklift down slopes with forks facing downhill. If carrying a load, drive backwards with forks facing uphill.? Avoid parking on a slope. If necessary, ensure the wheels are blocked.
- Never leave a forklift unattended, without first putting it in neutral, with the parking brake on and the forks lowered.

FINAL WORD

Forklifts make tasks easier in the workplace. As with any machinery, take the time to ensure that you have proper training and always use caution.