Equipment Checklist

We all know that pilots must go through a pre-flight checklist which helps ensure the safe operation of the airplane and checks that the emergency response system is ready to be used.

The same type of check should be done before operating any machinery or equipment. A “pre-flight” check can help ensure the machinery and stand-by systems are in safe condition. It can also help prevent time-consuming and costly breakdowns.

These checks are standard operating procedure on vehicles such as trucks and forklifts, and they are also vital for heavy equipment such as bulldozers and cranes. But a check can be equally valuable when used on any equipment, even an automobile or a power tool.

Your company may already have procedures in place for checking equipment before using it. If not, a checklist should be developed. The operator’s manual may have a checklist, or may at least offer suggestions for compiling one.

One kind of pre-work check is known as the circle check for vehicles. Here are two examples of how it is accomplished.

- Walk around the equipment and check for any signs of problems. In the case of a motor vehicle for instance, check to make sure tire pressure is adequate, lights and turn signals are working correctly, there is sufficient oil, fuel, and battery fluid, and windows are clear/clean.
- Another type of circle check is useful before starting up any vehicle. Walk around the vehicle, but this time look over the surroundings. Make sure there is nothing you will strike when the vehicle begins to move, such as another vehicle, a child playing behind the vehicle, or an overhead obstruction such as a power line. This type of circle check is especially important if you must back up.

Here are examples of the kinds of things to check before using many kinds of equipment or machinery:

- Make sure it will not cause danger to another person when you start the machinery. If anyone is doing repairs or adjustments on the equipment it should be labeled with lockout-tagout information, and the power should be disconnected.
- Check over the machinery for any signs of wear or damage which could affect safe operation. In the case of office equipment, you would pay particular attention to the condition of electrical cords and connections.
- Make sure machine guards are in place and functioning correctly.
- When examining machinery prior to start up, use only a safe source of light. For example, never check a vehicle battery while using a match for light—you could be injured in an explosion.
- Check yourself. Are you ready to work safely? Are you wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—such as eye protection when using a power tool?

Be sure to report any problems you encounter in your check, so they can be corrected. There should be a follow-up system in place to make sure the reported problems are taken care of.

These equipment checklists will vary widely in content. The points you check before running a table saw will be very different from what you check when starting up a crane. But the principle is the same—making sure that the machinery is ready to run safely and smoothly.