

Forklift Safety

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As a forklift operator, it's important to realize the majority of the safety responsibility rests on your shoulders – you are in the driver's seat.

Despite its low speed capability, a forklift can still dump its load on a worker, roll, tip over or crush a worker against a wall causing injuries that can be fatal. That's what you have to consider every time you get behind the wheel. It's also why only trained and authorized personnel should drive a forklift.

As a trained operator, you complete the following checklist at the beginning of every shift:

- Condition of tires and wheels
- Condition of forks, carriage, upright and chains
- Hydraulic levels
- Horn, brakes, lights
- Checked for leaks
- Speed control and brakes

Now it's time to pick up your first load. You know where you are going, what you are carrying and how much it weighs. You've also determined that the load weighs less than the weight-carrying capacity of your forklift.

Okay, you've secured your seatbelt and now you're ready to roll. You watch for pedestrians and vehicles, aware that others may not be paying attention.

Remember these tips:

- Carry the load as far back as possible to minimize the possibility of tipping.
- Always tilt the load toward the truck.
- Carry the load as low to the ground as possible while still

clearing any obstructions.

- Avoid loose loads above the backrest.
- Always look in the direction you are moving in.
- Don't rely on mirrors.
- Make sure that the area behind you is clear before backing up and turning.
- Know your job-site: depth of loading dock, clearances, blind spots and obstacles.
- Know the Ramp Rules – go up and down ramps forward. But if you are carrying a load, back down a ramp.

Keeping speed with the rules of the "road" and the condition of your vehicle will help you keep yourself and your co-workers safe. Many warehouse complexes have established traffic routes. Forklift operators should follow these routes at all times and heed all warning signs.