



Forklift Operator Safety

A forklift is a powerful tool that allows one person to precisely lift and place large heavy loads with little effort. Using a tool such as a forklift, cart or hand truck instead of lifting and carrying items by hand can reduce the risk of employee back injuries. However, there is great risk of injury or death when a forklift operator has not been trained in the principles that allow a forklift to lift heavy loads, is not familiar with how a particular forklift operates, operates the forklift carelessly, or uses a forklift that is not safe due to malfunctioning parts. Cornell University employees utilize nearly fifty forklifts throughout campus. These include electric and propane-powered forklifts as well as motorized pallet jacks. All operators must receive classroom safety training and an evaluation of their driving skills by EHS.

GENERAL FORKLIFT FACTS

- All forklifts must have an ID plate – showing vehicle weight, lifting capacities, and other key safety data.
- All forklifts must be equipped with a seatbelt. The seatbelt must be worn at all times.
- Only one person may ride on a forklift at any time.
- Do not lift anyone on the forks, unless you have an approved personnel lift attachment.
- Forklift operators must receive training and an evaluation of their driving skills at a minimum of every three years. EHS must provide this training.

INSPECTION AND MAINTNENCE

- Before each use, visually inspect the forklift for the ID plate, tire condition, leaks, forks/mast, chains and seat belt. Utilize the EHS Forklift Inspection Checklist as needed.
- Inspect operation of brakes, hydraulic controls, lights, back up alarm, and horn before each operation.
- If any item is missing or not operating correctly, report it immediately to your supervisor and do not operate.
- Maintain a maintenance schedule according to the manufacturer.
- When refueling, ensure all ignition sources are removed and adequate ventilation is present.

FORKLIFT OPERATION

- Operate the forklift with a defensive driving mentality. Operators must maintain control of the vehicle at all times. Pedestrians always have the right of way.
- When lifting a load, check to ensure load stability and weight limitations. Insert forks into load as far as possible. Lower load to travel height (4"-6" typically) as soon as possible.
- If vision is blocked, drive in reverse or use a spotter.
- Maintain stability to reduce the risk of tip-over. Watch for poor surface conditions, travel slow, never raise a load while in motion, avoid sharp turns, and use caution on inclines and loading docks.
- When parking, always shift into neutral, lower forks to ground level and set parking brake. If the operator is leaving the forklift unattended, turn off and remove the key.
- When traveling on roadways, observe all traffic laws. Each forklift that travels on a roadway must have an orange slow-moving-vehicle triangle.



Cornell University

Toolbox Safety Talk
Forklift Operator Safety

Date: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Location: _____

Presenter Name: _____

PRINT NAME	NET ID	DEPARTMENT	SIGNATURE

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