



FORKLIFT OPERATOR

SAFE PRACTICES FOR TRAVELING, MANEUVERING, AND PARKING

This RAP lesson discusses best safe operating practices for avoiding the most common types of forklift-related injuries during traveling, maneuvering, and parking operations.

Materials to have on hand:

Forklift

Load that is too high or big to see over or through when seated on the forklift

Items for attendees to consider during talk:

If you have to leave your forklift for a few minutes, what safety measures should you take while it's unattended?

If you are carrying a load that is too high or big to see clearly in front of you, how can you safely travel with the load?

TALK

Operating a forklift and driving a car have a few basic things in common when it comes to traveling, maneuvering, and parking safely: Always maintain control of the vehicle, keep your eyes and mind focused on what you are doing, and operate at speeds safe for the particular task at hand and surrounding conditions. As we go through some good forklift safe operating practices, think about how some of them match exactly to driving a car.

Traveling. Remember these simple safe practices when traveling in a forklift:

Look in the direction you are traveling; that means looking behind you while backing up. If you are carrying a load that completely blocks your view forward, travel in reverse while looking in the direction you are traveling. The key is to always keep a clear view in the direction you are traveling. If you travel in reverse, don't grab the overhead guard with your fingers through it—they could get crushed if something hits the guard.



Keep your body inside the frame, and always stay in the seat when you operate the controls. The frame is there to protect you.

Don't speed. Remember that the distance you need to stop will increase significantly with a full load. Slow down for wet and slippery floors.

Keep the forks low when traveling. Keeping them raised reduces stability and could result in a tipover.

Sound the horn at corners, aisles, doorways, and anywhere else that you might not see someone or someone might not see you.

Finally, check your clearances. Look above you before lifting a load, and check your turning clearance because the rear end of the forklift will swing wide.

Maneuvering. There are two primary hazards to consider when changing directions in a forklift: a tipover and a collision with a pedestrian, another vehicle, or an object. When turning, reduce speed, especially when working in confined areas or narrow aisles. When the forklift turns a corner, the rear of the forklift swings in the opposite direction of the turn. Anticipate the rear-end swing, and start the turn as close to the inside corner as possible. Pay attention to the load to make sure it doesn't shift during the turn.

Plan your route, and think ahead about the turns you'll make. Planning can help you stay focused even when there are distractions.

Keep the forks as low to the ground as possible when turning.

Never turn on a sloping surface. The forklift may tip over even on a very small slope.

Parking. Last year, a warehouse worker in Florida who was untrained in forklift operations tried to move an unattended forklift idling in front of a loading dock that was blocking a trailer ready to be unloaded. The worker got in the forklift, raised the forks, put the shift lever in forward, and stepped on the pedal. The forks punctured several containers of chlorine bleach on a pallet, which spilled onto the loading dock floor.

Even when parked, a forklift can be a hazard, like the incident with the warehouse worker in Florida!



Make sure the forklift is not blocking an aisle, travel paths for other equipment, or exit routes. Park a safe distance from fire aisles, stairways, or fire equipment. Do not block traffic.

Never park within 8 feet of the center of a railroad track; your forklift could be struck by a passing train.

Never walk more than 25 feet away from your forklift, even if you can keep an eye on it from that distance. When it's left unattended, the forks have to be fully lowered, controls put in neutral, power shut off and key removed, and brakes set.

Tilt the mast forward slightly, and lower the forks to the floor until the fork tips touch the floor. This will make sure someone doesn't trip over or get hurt by hitting a fork when walking by.

If the forklift is parked on a sloping or uneven surface, block the wheels.