

Powered Industrial Trucks — The 6 Forklift Safety Rules

Forklifts cause about 85 worker deaths and tens of thousands of serious injuries each year. These 6 rules from the OSHA Powered Industrial Trucks standard prevent the tip-overs, struck-by incidents, and pedestrian collisions that drive those numbers.

01

Train and certify every operator

Only trained, evaluated, and certified operators may drive. Training includes formal instruction, practical demonstration, and workplace evaluation. Refresher training is required after an accident, near-miss, unsafe operation, or every 3 years.

§1910.178(l)(1)–(4)

02

Inspect before every shift

Examine the forklift at the start of each shift: tires, forks, mast, chains, hoses, hydraulic fluid, brakes, steering, horn, lights, backup alarm, seat belt, and data plate. Any defect that affects safe operation = remove from service.

§1910.178(q)(7)

03

Never exceed rated capacity

Check the load against the data-plate capacity, accounting for attachments and load center. Center the load on the forks. Travel with the load low (4–6 in off the floor) and tilted slightly back to maintain stability.

§1910.178(o)(2), (a)(3)

04

Travel safely

Obey posted speed limits. Sound the horn at intersections and blind corners. Yield to pedestrians — they always have the right of way. Travel in reverse when the load blocks forward view. Look in the direction of travel. No passengers.

§1910.178(n)(1)–(6)

05

Lift and place loads on level ground

Stop before lifting or lowering. Tilt the mast forward only when over the rack or floor location. Never raise or lower loads while traveling. Do not drive with elevated loads. Never use forks to lift people unless using an approved work platform.

§1910.178(m)(7), (o)(3), (n)(8)

06

Park properly — every time

When leaving the truck (even briefly), lower the forks fully to the floor, set the controls to neutral, shut off the power, and apply the parking brake. If parked on an incline, chock the wheels. Never block aisles or emergency exits.

§1910.178(m)(5)(i)–(iii)

Need operator certification, refresher training, or a pedestrian-vs-forklift traffic-plan review?

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