

# SAFETY MEMO

May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – Powered Industrial Trucks



Did you know?

Originally published October 15, 2018. Updated statistics and references.

## What is a Powered Industrial Truck?

A powered industrial truck, more commonly known as a forklift, is used in many different applications to move materials. The forklifts are also used to load and unload objects. They can either be driven by the operator or hand operated by a walking operator<sup>1</sup>. There are many different types of trucks and workers should familiarize themselves with the different hazards that may be present.

**In the US, it is a violation of federal law for anyone under the age of 18 or for anyone over 18 years of age who is not properly trained to operate a forklift.**

## Statistics

There are many reasons why people are injured by forklifts including inadequate training of workers; driving at high speeds; lack of proper tools, attachments, or accessories; poor maintenance and age of forklifts; and not using seatbelts<sup>2</sup>.

In 2021, there were 70 work-related deaths in the United States, and 7,290 nonfatal injuries involving days away from work in 2020<sup>3</sup>.

## Types of accidents leading to death

Most of the fatalities involving forklifts are caused by transportation incidents. 80% of forklift accidents involve a pedestrian<sup>4</sup>.

Here are a few of the most common hazards encountered while operating a forklift:

- Being crushed by a forklift tipping over or becoming trapped between a forklift and a surface
- Struck or run over by a forklift
- Poorly secured loads falling over

- Falls from platform on the forks (elevated height falls)



Figure 1 : Powered Industrial Truck<sup>5</sup>

## How to avoid an incident<sup>6</sup>

- Ensure that proper delimitation signage is in place (ribbon/cones)
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Walk in designated pedestrian areas only
- Make eye contact with the forklift operator and get them to acknowledge your presence before approaching a forklift, crossing the forklift's path, or walking behind a forklift
- Wear high visibility clothing
- Look both ways before crossing a forklift aisle
- Do not walk past a forklift while its forks are in the air
- Keep a safe distance from a truck performing a load lifting maneuver

<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Labor. OSHA. (ND). Powered Industrial Trucks – Forklifts. Retrieved from <https://www.osha.gov/power-industrial-trucks>

<sup>2</sup> CCOHS. (ND). Health and Safety Report: raising the issue of forklift safety. Retrieved from <https://www.ccohs.ca/newsletters/hsreport/issues/2016/01/ezine.html#hsreport-tipstools>

<sup>3</sup> NSC Injury Facts. (ND). Forklifts. Retrieved from <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/safety-topics/forklifts/#:-:text=Forklift%2Drelated%20injuries%20are%20also,away%20from%20work%20in%202020.>

<sup>4</sup> The Journal of Light Construction. (July 14, 2013). Top 10 forklift accidents. Retrieved from [https://www.ilconline.com/tools/trucks-equipment/top-10-forklift-accidents\\_o](https://www.ilconline.com/tools/trucks-equipment/top-10-forklift-accidents_o)

<sup>5</sup> Atlantic Training. <http://www.atlantictraining.com/shop/c-forklift-training-115-1.html> CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

<sup>6</sup> CCOHS. Forklift trucks – common factors in forklift incidents. Retrieved from [https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety\\_haz/forklift/accident.html](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/forklift/accident.html)