

Forklifts – Training Requirements for Powered Industrial Trucks

Powered industrial trucks (PITs), commonly called forklifts, are used in many industries, primarily to move materials. They can also be used to raise, lower, or even remove large objects or a number of smaller objects on pallets or in boxes, crates, or other containers. PITs can either be ridden by the operator or controlled by a walking operator. Over-the-road haulage trucks and earth-moving equipment that have been modified to accept forks are not considered PITs.



OSHA statistics indicate there are roughly 85 fatalities and 34,900 serious injuries each year involving PITs; 42% of these accidents result in the operator being crushed by a tipping vehicle. Workers can also be injured when

- lift trucks are inadvertently driven off loading docks;
- lifts fall between docks and an unsecured trailer;
- they're struck by a lift truck; or
- they fall while on elevated pallets, forks.

PIT Trainer Requirements

According to OSHA, PIT training and evaluation should be conducted by “persons who have the knowledge, training, and experience to train PIT operators and evaluate their competence” for each type of PIT in the workplace. PIT trainers should also be familiar with:

1. The 1910.178 OSHA training requirements;
2. The 14 PIT-related topics and 10 workplace-related topics covered in the operator training program content (where applicable) per 1910.178(I)(3); and
3. Center of Gravity, Load Center, and the Stability Triangle.

New Operator Training Requirements

OSHA 1910.178(l) requires that each employer shall ensure that each PIT operator is competent to operate a PIT safely, as demonstrated by the successful completion of training and evaluation. Training shall consist of:

1. Formal instruction (e.g., lecture, interactive computer learning, video tape, written material, etc.). PIT operators shall receive initial training in the 14 PIT-related topics and 10-workplace related topics outlined in the training program content (where applicable)

per 1910.178(I)(3). PIT operators must demonstrate successful completion by a written or oral test or other appropriate means, such as an evaluation by the instructor.

2. Practical training (demonstrations performed by the trainer and practical exercises performed by the trainee) requires the trainee to perform all required operations safely.

Training Update Requirements

OSHA 1910.178(1)(4)(iii) requires that an evaluation of each PIT operator's performance be conducted at least once every three years to establish they're qualified to operate the equipment safely. The person conducting the evaluation would do two things: 1.) observe the PIT operator during normal operation to determine if the operator is performing safely, and 2.) ask pertinent questions of the operator to ensure he/she has the knowledge or experience needed to operate a PIT safely.

Refresher Training Requirements

Refresher training is required when: 1.) an operator is observed operating a PIT unsafely; 2.) an operator receives an unsatisfactory workplace evaluation; 3.) an operator is assigned to a different type of PIT; and 4.) when changes in workplace conditions could affect safe operation. Refresher training shall consist of formal instruction and practical training.

Training Documentation Requirements

PIT operator certification records should include the name of the operator, the date of the training, the date of the evaluation, and the identity of the person(s) performing the training or evaluation.

