

Forklifts – Safe Operation of Power Industrial Trucks

OSHA estimates power industrial trucks (PIT), commonly called forklifts, cause about 85 fatal accidents per year, 34,900 accidents resulting in serious injury, and 61,800 non-serious accidents. Approximately 42% of PIT-related fatalities involve being crushed by a PIT that's tipped over; 25% involve being crushed between the vehicle and a surface. The industries with the highest percentage of fatality claims include manufacturing (42.5%) and construction (23.8%). According to OSHA, 70% of all PIT accidents could have been avoided.



Safety tips to protect the operator and other workers

- Do not operate a PIT unless you have been properly trained.
- Do not allow passengers to ride on a PIT unless a seat is provided.
- Do not use a PIT to elevate workers who are standing on the forks.
- Use seatbelts at all times while operating a PIT. If the PIT is not equipped with a seatbelt, the PIT should be removed from use until appropriate repairs are made.
- Keep hands, arms, and legs inside the cage.
- Do not exceed the load capacity.
- Operate the PIT at a speed that will permit it to be stopped safely.
- Drive, turn, and stop slowly.
- Yield the right of way to pedestrians.
- Do not let anyone walk under elevated loads.
- Slow down and sound the horn at all intersections, doorways, and other locations where vision is obstructed.
- Do not exceed the load capacity.
- Look toward the travel path and keep a clear view at all times. If the load is blocking your view, drive in reverse.
- Use extreme caution on grades and ramps.
- Keep forks six inches or less from the travel surface when the PIT is moving.
- Do not raise or lower the forks while the PIT is moving.
- On grades, tilt the load back and raise it only far as needed to clear the road surface.
- The load should be kept in the front on an upgrade and in the back on a downgrade.
- If the operator must leave a PIT, the brakes should be set, the controls left in neutral, the power shutoff, and the keys removed.

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Procedures to follow when using a PIT to elevate personnel

- If you're using a PIT to elevate personnel, use an approved work platform secured to the carriage or forks.



- Elevate personnel on a platform only when the vehicle is directly below the work area.
- The operator must remain at the controls of the PIT at all times while a worker is elevated in a work platform.
- Do not travel to another location with the work platform elevated or with personnel in the platform.

If the PIT begins to tip over:

- Stay in the seat – do not attempt to jump clear.
- Hold on tightly to the steering wheel and brace yourself against the seat.
- Keep your body inside the frame of the machine and lean in the opposite direction of the overturn.

Inspections

At the beginning of each shift, and before operating a PIT, inspect its condition, giving special attention to:

- tires
- lights
- horn
- battery (cables, connections, fluid, etc.)
- controls
- lift and tilt systems, load-engaging means
- brakes
- steering mechanism
- mass
- hydraulics (raise forks up/down)

PITs that are in need of repair, are unsafe in any way, or contribute to an unsafe condition should be reported immediately to the operator's designated authority. The PIT should not be operated until it has been restored to safe operating condition.