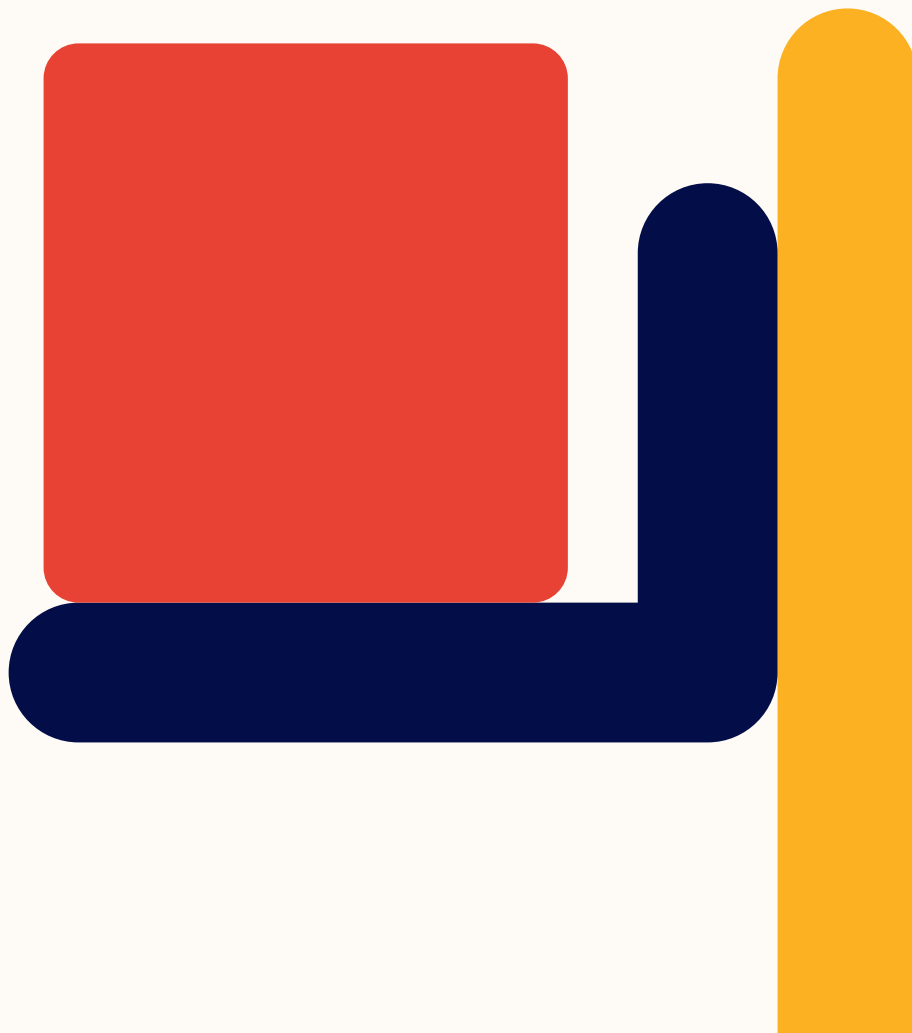


5 forklift hazards

to eliminate
from the
workplace.



the three most common types of PIT injuries occur when a lift truck overturns, hits or crushes a worker, and when a worker falls off.

source: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2001-109/default.html>

Accidents caused by powered industrial trucks (PIT), commonly called forklifts or lift trucks, can arise due to a misuse of the machinery itself, as well as poor or unsafe working conditions. As an employer, the biggest opportunity for reducing these incidents is to prepare your team and monitor the state of your workplace.

To ensure safe and legal forklift operation at your worksite, make sure all drivers are at least 18 years of age and have successfully completed PIT training and evaluation, as outlined by OSHA.¹ Make sure all equipment has been thoroughly inspected. If a vehicle shows signs of needing repair, remove it from duty immediately, and log that it is currently out of commission to prevent further use. For forklifts that have passed inspection, instruct your staff on OSHA's best practices for handling, traveling and maneuvering.² For additional training topics and other major hazards to watch for when overseeing the use of mechanical handling equipment, read on.

hazards and how to avoid them

low clearance

With the ground in tip-top shape, it's time to set your sights higher. Obstructions lingering overhead, like lights, pipes or sprinklers, can impede the path of a PIT and cause damage to its load.

- Observe all routes beforehand to ensure adequate clearance, and prohibit drivers from traveling with elevated loads.
- For close-call areas, hang signage to warn operators of oncoming obstacles that may be looming overhead.
- Cover how to properly navigate around overhead obstacles during training with your team.

¹ "Powered Industrial Trucks." Osha.gov. [https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9828#1910.178\(l\)](https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9828#1910.178(l)) (accessed August 8, 2018).

² "Operating the Forklift: Traveling and Maneuvering." Osha.gov. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/operations/maneuvering.html> (accessed August 8, 2018).

³ "Narrow Aisles." Osha.gov. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/workplacehazards/narrowaisles.html#reach> (accessed August 8, 2018).

pedestrian movement

Pedestrian foot traffic on the floor increases the likelihood of collision with a vehicle. To prevent these incidents, follow OSHA guidelines, and separate pedestrian paths from powered industrial truck lanes. Clearly mark the aisles and passageways where mechanical equipment is being used to prevent on-foot personnel from wandering into a danger zone. Additionally:

- No riders. Prohibit drivers from taking on passengers and transporting employees on forklifts.
- Set aside separate walkways for walkers, or raise railings and barriers to keep everyone in line. Check out OSHA's solutions for navigating particularly narrow aisles.³
- Install mirrors at key intersections to prevent surprises from coming around the bend. Keep speeds in check by posting traffic control signs and speed limit markers.

most fatalities occur when a worker is crushed by a forklift that has overturned or fallen from a loading dock.

source: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/operations/index.html>

poor floor conditions

Monitor ground conditions — and the condition of your equipment — to avoid crashes and collisions.

- Ensure all operating surfaces can support the combined weight of the forklift, driver and load.
- Clear all pathways of debris that could disrupt the trajectory of a powered industrial truck.
- If you spot hazardous floor conditions or spills, apply an absorbent and cord off the area from the rest of the operating floor until the conditions have been addressed.

surpassing loading limits

Overloaded floors run the risk of collapsing and taking entire forklifts (and their operators) down with them.

- Examine your floor conditions for holes, cracks or other indicators of a compromised surface.
- If you uncover any issues, like a loose nail or a weak board, fix them immediately.
- Respect all floor loading limits going forward, and make sure your team knows which areas are off limits to lift trucks.

uneven ground

Pay special attention to your loading docks, ramps and other inclined areas, as their very design can expose forklift operators to deadly drops.

- Instruct drivers to take it slow, be mindful of others around them and, most importantly, always keep the edge of the dock in view.
- For greater visibility, paint or mark the edges of the loading dock to help it stand out.
- Examine the rest of your loading area like you examined your main floor to keep it free from debris and wet or icy conditions.

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stay-safe cheat sheet

inspect vehicles

- Inspect all equipment and vehicles regularly.
- If you find an issue, remove the forklift from rotation immediately.
- Keep a record of machinery that's out of commission to prevent accidental usage.

train employees

- Conduct regularly scheduled safety meetings to keep safety top of mind with your team.
- Share OSHA guidelines for safe operation of a powered industrial truck with your staff.
- Communicate hazardous floor conditions to your team and keep everyone alert.

monitor floor conditions

- Make sure operating surfaces can handle the weight of a loaded forklift.
- Remove debris and obstacles from pathways.
- Apply absorbent to wet or icy conditions and block the area from vehicle pathways.

respect load limits

- Don't overload floors. Monitor them for cracks, holes or other signs of wear.
- If you discover dangerous flaws in the flooring, address them immediately.
- Ensure that your team knows and respects the weight limits for all working surfaces.

eliminate overhead obstacles

- Make sure forklifts have adequate clearance under lights, sprinklers and piping.
- For unavoidable overhead obstacles, hang signs to warn oncoming operators.
- Train drivers on how to properly navigate around overhead obstacles, and restrict elevated loads.

direct pedestrian traffic

- Separate pedestrian paths from powered industrial truck lanes.
- Install mirrors at intersections to reduce blind spots and prevent collision.
- Set and display speed limits, and hang traffic control signs.

pay attention to docks, ramps and inclines

- Ask operators to reduce speeds and be especially mindful of their surroundings.
- Clear docks and ramps of obstacles and avoid wet or icy conditions.
- Paint the edges of the loading dock to help it stand out to drivers.