



Powered Industrial Lift Trucks – Operational Safety

Safety is the most important factor when lifting, moving, or lowering a load with a powered industrial truck (i.e., forklift, pallet jack, etc.). Smooth operation is essential for maintaining stability and preventing accidents. No one should operate a powered industrial truck without formal training. The following information offers recommendations for loading, carrying the load, and unloading a powered industrial truck to ensure worker safety.

Operator Safety

- Do not operate a powered industrial truck unless you have been trained.
- Always buckle the seatbelt, if one is available.
- Report any damage or problems that occur to a powered industrial truck during your shift to your supervisor.
- Do not jump from an overturning, sit-down type powered industrial truck (i.e., forklift) - stay with the truck, holding on firmly and leaning in the opposite direction of the overturn.
- If a lateral tipover occurs on a stand-up type powered industrial truck (i.e., walkie/rider), exit from the rear by stepping backward.
- Slow down and sound the horn at cross aisles and other locations where vision is obstructed.
- Look toward the travel path, and keep a clear view of it.
- Do not allow passengers to ride on forklift trucks unless a seat is provided.
- When dismounting from a forklift, set the parking brake, lower the forks or lifting carriage, and neutralize the controls.
- Do not drive the forklift up to anyone standing in front of a bench or other fixed object.
- Do not use a forklift to elevate workers who are standing on the forks.
- Whenever a truck is used to elevate personnel, secure the elevating platform to the lifting carriage or forks of the forklift. Do not drive to another location with the work platform elevated.

Workplace Conditions

- Only use powered industrial trucks that are rated for the specific work environment (e.g., Type EX powered industrial trucks may be used in atmospheres where there is combustible dust).
- Ensure aisles are wide enough for powered industrial trucks.
- Do not allow aisles to become crowded or cluttered to a point of restricting forklift operations.
- Keep pedestrian traffic within designated walk areas.
- Keep powered industrial trucks, dock plates, pallets, and similar equipment in good repair.
- Place mirrors in key locations to eliminate blind spots, when trucks must move through doorways, turn corners, or operate in areas where the line of sight is restricted.



Loading/Unloading

- Make sure the load is within the powered industrial truck rated capacity. The nameplate lists the maximum weight the powered industrial truck can carry - never exceed it!
- Check that the load is stable, centered, and stack and/or tie uneven or loose loads.
- Use the proper lift fixture for the type of load (e.g., carpet spike, drum grapple, etc.).
- When lifting a load, spread the forks as widely as possible for even distribution. Drive into the loading position inserting the forks far enough to be sure the load is completely on the forks and is slightly touching the carriage. Then tilt the forks to shift the weight of the load back. These actions will make the lift more stable.
- When loading or unloading onto a truck, inspect the floors before entering with a powered industrial truck. Ensure that the trailer's rear wheels are chocked, the brakes are locked, and a dock plate is secure and will not move.
- If you are unloading onto a stack, position the powered industrial truck properly before lifting the forks and check for overhead clearance before raising the load.
- Use dock lights and headlights when working in a dark trailer.
- Sound the horn when entering or exiting the trailer.
- Raise and position the load by moving slowly into position, and ensure that there are 2 to 3 in (5 to 7.6 cm) of clearance on all sides and the back of the load.
- If the load is unbalanced, keep the heavier end closer to the carriage, tilt the mast back, lift the load, and tilt the mast, if so equipped, back a little more before traveling.

Traveling

- Keep the forks at a height of 6 to 10 in (15.24 to 25.4 cm) above the ground to avoid potential ground hazards and carry the load low and tilted back.
- Do not carry anything on the overhead guard.
- Travel in reverse if the load blocks your forward vision, or use a spotter if there is not a clear view.
- Use extreme caution on grades or ramps.
- On grades, tilt the load back and raise it only as far as needed to clear the road surface.
- Do not raise or lower the load while moving, exercise caution on wet surfaces, and travel at an appropriate speed.
- Provide fall restraints for high lift powered industrial truck operators.



Contact

AIG Programs Loss Control

T 800 611 3994

F 888 659 9047

programslc@aig.com



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