

# Forklift Safety

*[To make this meeting as effective as possible, conduct it in an area of your facility where forklifts are used. This way, you can use live demonstrations to reinforce your message]*

About 100 workers are killed each year as a result of forklift accidents. About 1/4 of these fatalities are caused by overturning. Other common causes are workers being struck by materials, workers being struck by the forklift, and workers falling from the forklift.

Forklift operation is not as simple as it looks. But with a little experience, it's not an impossible skill to master. Unfortunately, those who operate forklifts day in and day out have a tendency to take short cuts and to ignore basic safety rules. They develop the old "It can't happen to me" attitude.

## Identifying Forklift Hazards

You can avoid becoming a statistic if you'll just take the time to review forklift hazards and how to avoid them. Try to keep them in mind each and every time you prepare to use a forklift.

Tipping over and losing part of a load are the most common causes of forklift-related injuries. Some factors you need to consider include:

The capacity of the forklift - can it handle the size and weight of your load?

Any odd characteristics of the load - is it top heavy, cylindrical or awkward?

The condition of the forklift - are the forks damaged or is there some other problem that could cause an accident?

Where you are and where you are going with the load - are there any obstacles, bumps, ramps, people, cross aisles or narrow passageways to consider?

Other things going on that may be problematic - can co-workers see you on the forklift; can they hear you?

## Forklift Safety Rules

1. Operate the forklift only if you've been trained
2. Maintain a safe following distance from other forklifts - about three vehicle lengths.
3. Follow our speed limit and other regulations
4. Drive with your load low - six or eight inches off the ground - and tilted slightly back
5. Exercise extra caution when driving over duckboards and bridge plates and make sure your load is within their capacity as well
6. Raise and lower your load only when you are stopped
7. Stop and sound the horn at intersections
8. Avoid sharp turns.
9. Keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle
10. Be sure to wear a hard hat and other protective equipment when necessary
11. Be sure your load is stable and secure
12. When leaving the forklift, lower the forks, neutralize the controls, shut it off and set the brakes

## Conclusion

Failing to act responsibly when you're behind the wheel not only puts the load at risk, but puts you and co-workers in danger. Please keep this in mind each time you prepare to turn the key.