

SAFETY BRIEF: **Powered Industrial Trucks & Heavy Equipment**

Approximately 400 people in American die each year in heavy equipment accidents, according to OSHA, and heavy equipment failure or misuse is one of the top 10 causes of workplace fatalities. Some types of heavy equipment and machinery include bulldozers, backhoes, dump trucks, front-end loaders and snow plows. Powered industrial trucks—commonly called forklifts—are able to raise or lower large objects, stack them on pallets, or place them in crates. Without these earthmoving heavy-duty pieces of equipment, much of our modern infrastructure, maintenance of our roads, and distribution of supplies would be nearly impossible to accomplish.

Training, Training, Training!

NOTE: *It is a violation of Federal law for anyone under 18 years of age to operate a forklift or for anyone over 18 years of age who is not properly trained and certified to do so.*

Before operating any piece of equipment, operators must be certified and trained to use it. Employers should never allow an untrained operator into the cab of a piece of heavy machinery, even if that includes simply moving a piece of machinery to a new area. By some estimates, up to 70% of accidents, both employee injury and property damage, could be prevented with proper training.

Where can an operator obtain the training required to become a qualified forklift operator?

The employer is responsible for implementing a training program and must certify that each operator has received the training, ensuring that only trained drivers are allowed to operate powered industrial trucks. An evaluation of each qualified operator must be conducted during the initial training, at least once every three years, and after refresher training. The training and evaluation may be conducted by the employer, if qualified, or other qualified individual(s).

What type of training is required?

The training must be a combination of formal (lecture, video, etc.) and practical (demonstration and practical exercises), and include an evaluation of operator performance in the workplace. Truck-related and workplace-related topics must be included, along with the requirements of the OSHA standard. The specific training topics are listed in the standard [29 CFR 1910.178(l)(3)(i)].

Who should conduct the training?

All training and evaluation must be conducted by a person with the necessary knowledge, training and experience to train operators and evaluate their competency. This may be the employer, another employee, or other qualified person. The training and evaluation does not have to be conducted by a single individual but can be done by several persons, provided each one is qualified.



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Is refresher training required?

Refresher training is required when the operator has been observed driving unsafely, been involved in an accident or near-miss, received an evaluation that indicates unsafe operation, is assigned to drive a different type of powered industrial truck, or if a workplace condition affecting safe operation changes. An operator evaluation is required after refresher training.

What does "certified" mean?

The employer must certify that each operator has been trained and evaluated as required by the standard. The certification must include the name of the operator, the date of training, the date of evaluation, and the identity of the person(s) performing the training or evaluation.

General Heavy Equipment Operations

Trained operators should inspect their equipment regularly before operation. A damaged machine is a dangerous machine. In the event a piece of heavy equipment were to fail while in use, it may result in significant damage to surrounding property or equipment and employee injury or death. Scheduling regular inspections and maintenance not only keeps your workers safe but also prolongs the lifespan of costly heavy equipment.

All vehicles must have:

- A service brake system, an emergency brake system, and a parking brake system.
- Working headlights, tail lights, and brake lights.
- An audible warning device (horn).
- Intact windshield with working windshield wipers.

Employees who operate this equipment must:

- Be trained on the equipment; read and understand the operator's manual.
- Check vehicles at the beginning of each shift to ensure that the parts, equipment, and accessories are in safe condition to use. Replace or repair any defective parts before use.
- Verify that the roadway or work area is maintained to safely accommodate the equipment and vehicles involved. Watch for potholes, slippery surfaces, narrow passages, low clearances, overhead wiring, pipes and ducts. Treat the 6-foot area around the equipment as a "danger zone."
- Be alert and aware of surroundings to avoid having to make sudden moves; don't turn or stop suddenly.
- Not operate vehicle in reverse with an obstructed rear view unless an audible warning horn is loud enough to be heard or a signal employee can indicate to the driver that it is safe to move.
- Ensure that the seat is securely fastened and equipped with operable seat belts.
- Keep arms, hands and legs within the operator's cage.



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- Drive and operate the equipment responsibly; refrain from using earbuds, cell phones, or listening to loud music.
- Observe and follow speed limits, slowing down for corners and turns, rough or sloping surfaces, and large loads.

Personal Protective Equipment

General personal protective equipment (PPE) for both heavy equipment and powered industrial trucks include:

- Hard hat for overhead impact or electrical hazards
- Eye protection with side shields
- Gloves chosen for job hazards (e.g., heavy-duty leather work gloves for handling debris with sharp edges)
- ANSI-approved protective footwear
- Respiratory protection as necessary; N, R, or P95 filtering face masks used for environmental dusts, dried mud, dirt and silt.
- Hearing protection when working around potential noise sources and when noise levels exceed 90 dBA. A useful rule of thumb: if you cannot hold a conversation in a normal speaking voice with a person who is standing at arms length (approximately 3 feet), the noise level may exceed 90 dBA.
- Additional PPE for extreme cold/hot temperatures

The AMLJIA Online University offers multiple safety trainings on the following heavy machines: Forklift, Backhoe, Dump Truck, Snow Plow, Street Sweeper, Road Graders and Bulldozers. These trainings include proper equipment operations and safety practices, general preventive maintenance practices, and safe refueling and recharging procedures. However, a skills test must be conducted on each type of machinery an operator will use before that operator is certified to use each piece of heavy machinery or powered industrial truck.

Other related online safety courses include Hearing Conservation, Personal Protective Equipment, and Hazard Recognition. These courses are available at no cost to AMLJIA members, take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour to complete, and are available 24/7 to anyone with computer access. Be sure to take advantage of these free courses!

