Forklift safety

For the start of the shift: the pre-use check, how to carry the load and why only certified operators drive.

DURATION
5 minutes

WHO LEADS IT
The warehouse supervisor or the safety lead, next to a forklift

WHEN TO USE IT
At the start of the shift, when a new operator starts or when a different type of truck arrives

WHAT TO BRING
A parked forklift and the company's pre-use checklist

Read it out loud

Good morning, everyone. Today we talk about the forklift, the machine that moves around us more than any other in this building.

Before the first load, the operator checks the truck: brakes, steering, horn, lights, forks, mast chains, tires and leaks. If something is wrong, the truck stays parked, out of service, and the supervisor hears about it.

Here is a situation that repeats. The shift starts late, someone skips the check to save five minutes and finds out in the middle of the aisle that the brakes are weak. With a load on the forks, that discovery is expensive.

While driving, keep the forks low and the load tilted back. Don't raise the load while moving, don't take corners fast and never carry more than the capacity on the data plate.

If the load blocks your view, drive in reverse looking where you are going, or ask for a spotter. On a ramp, keep the load on the uphill side.

Only people the company has trained, evaluated and certified drive a forklift. If you see someone on a truck without that certification, say something.

When you leave the truck: forks down, controls in neutral, power off and the brake set.

To wrap up: five minutes of inspection at the start of the shift save you from rushing in the middle of it. Today, every operator goes through the full checklist before turning the key.

What OSHA says

- Under 29 CFR 1910.178(l), only operators who have completed training and an evaluation may drive (1910.178(l)(1)), the employer certifies each one (1910.178(l)(6)) and evaluates their performance at least every three years (1910.178(l)(4)(iii)).
- Trucks are examined before being placed in service, at least daily (1910.178(q)(7)), and one that is not in safe operating condition is removed from service (1910.178(q)(1)). On grades over 10 percent, loaded trucks travel with the load upgrade (1910.178(n)(7)(i)).

Source: OSHA, 29 CFR 1910.178 (Powered industrial trucks), current text. Reviewed on October 29, 2026.

Questions for the crew

1. **What does the operator check before the first load?**
   Expected answer: Brakes, steering, horn, lights, forks, chains, tires and leaks, with the company checklist. Trucks are examined before being placed in service, at least daily (1910.178(q)(7)), and one that is not in safe operating condition is removed from service (1910.178(q)(1)).

2. **Who can drive a forklift here?**
   Expected answer: Only operators the company has trained and evaluated (1910.178(l)(1)), with a certification that lists the operator, the training date, the evaluation date and who performed them (1910.178(l)(6)). The evaluation is repeated at least every three years (1910.178(l)(4)(iii)).

3. **What do you do when you leave the forklift?**
   Expected answer: Forks fully lowered, controls in neutral, power off and brakes set; on an incline, the wheels are blocked (1910.178(m)(5)(i)).

Sign-in sheet

Date _____ **Area** _____ **Led by** _____

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