

Fork lift Follies



Keeping a close eye on driving practices is crucial to **lift truck safety**. So what are the most common things to watch out for?

The consequences of a forklift running amok can include damaged goods, serious or fatal injuries, downtime and legal action and conscientious managers will not only train drivers but supervise them constantly afterwards. Key areas to monitor include:

Safety checks

Ensure drivers check their truck for safety before driving. Basic checks include a visual inspection of tyres, lift chains and hoses and testing of brakes, steering, lights and horn. Drivers should also ensure truck forks are properly seated and carry out a full elevation check.

Driving style

Make sure drivers slow down where necessary and use their horn to alert others to their presence. Watch out also for anyone driving with elevated forks - whether loaded or not, the effect on overall centre of gravity is significant.

Remember too that particular care is needed from drivers when braking or cornering – tip-over is still the most frequent forklift accident type.

Load stability

Watch out for unstable loads. Drivers often pick up unstable loads in the belief that slow, careful driving will keep them in balance but anything out of the ordinary – debris, a patch of oil or just applying the brakes – can cause a spillage. Unstable or loose loads should always be secured by strapping or wrapping.

Inclines are a particular hazard. Ensure your drivers always keep loads, even stable ones, uphill of the truck.

Loading bays

Loading bays can be dangerous, especially if goods vehicles depart unexpectedly, leaving forklifts with restricted forward vision to drive clean off the edge of the dock.

Before attempting to drive into the rear of trailers, lift truck drivers should ensure the trailer is properly secured (via a traffic light or vehicle restraint system), ensure the dock plate is secure and check that the trailer floor is sound. Drivers also need to be aware of other people working within the trailer and leave them a clear exit route.

Truck abuse

Don't let drivers carry passengers as they will inevitably be partially outside the 'safety cell'. Watch out for drivers straying partially outside the cab themselves, too, for example when reaching out from the driving seat to collect a picking list.

Never allow forklifts to be used as access devices with employees simply standing on raised forks to inspect lighting or roofs. Proper access cage attachments are available and must be used.

Pedestrians

Don't allow pedestrians and forklifts to share the same space unless they have to and make sure both show consideration for those around them. Ensure truck drivers park safely and always remove the key on parking.

Pedestrians working near forklifts should be wearing hard hats and steel-capped boots to help minimise any injuries. Drivers – who become pedestrians once they dismount – should be similarly equipped. ■

