

# FORKLIFT OPERATION

Forklifts are an integral part of our work environment. They are a useful, versatile and yet dangerous piece of equipment. Forklift operators and other people who work in the vicinity of forklifts need to be aware of hazards associated with the operation of forklifts.

Forklift operators are required to be trained in accordance with NOHSC 7019 (1992), i.e. The National Occupational Health and Safety Competency Standards for the Operation of Loadshifting and Other Types of Specified Equipment. In short, this requires the operator to:

1. Assess hazards in the work area and implement hazard control strategies.
2. Check controls and equipment to ensure they are in a safe operating condition.
3. Shift loads safely.
4. Park the vehicle safely and secure it.

Operators have a legal requirement under the OSH Act to operate in accordance with that standard. If they contravene The Act they can be fined \$10,000, and if that results in a serious injury they can be fined \$20,000.

Under The Act, companies are required to provide, as far as is practicable, safe systems of work so the employees are not exposed to hazards. They must provide adequate training and supervision. They must provide safe plant and equipment They must consult with OSH representatives and any other person in relation to OSH matters.

To assist operators and the company to comply, the following Safe Operating Procedure has been developed. This in no way replaces formal training as required under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Forklifts must always be driven in accordance with the National Guidelines NOHSC 7019 (1992). For further information refer to the Worksafe Guidance Note, "[Working Safely with Forklifts](#)".

Overall there needs to be a process whereby workers, supervisors and management get together and design a formula so each can achieve their targets in a safe way.

This cannot be a theoretical formula. It must be workable at all levels so that safe operating procedures can be implemented and adhered to at all times.

## **Areas where Safe Operating Procedures are breaking down in most industries:**

### **Production:**

Production is currently taking a much higher priority than safety. There is a need to produce a certain amount of product and therefore the forklift operators are required to operate at faster than what is deemed a safe speed.

### **Underlying Mentality:**

The supervisors do the best job they can, but they cannot be supervising every individual at every minute of the day. There appears to be a lackadaisical approach to how the forklifts are operated. It seems to be a bit of a case of lack of ownership or responsibility. Because the forklifts may have previously been driven in a poor way, i.e. too much speed, sharp cornering, sharp braking, the operators think it is OK for them to operate that way now. Since forklift operators have been wearing seatbelts, more people are now being killed by falling loads than are being killed by falling forklifts. It is critical that loads are stable and forklifts are driven at a safe speed. Whether your operating environment is perfectly flat or not, and whether there are many or few hazards in your work area (fixed or temporary or potential), then the forklift must be driven at a safe speed.

# FORKLIFT SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURE

## 1. Operation of Forklifts:

- 1.1 Only operators who have a Class LF National Licence to Perform High Risk Work are allowed to operate forklifts
- 1.2 Only operators who have been inducted on the type of forklift, and in the type of work they are required to perform, are to operate a forklift.

## 2. Pre-operational and after start checks:

The first operator for the day is to complete pre-operational and after start checks. The forklift is not to be used until the checklist has been completed.

## 3. Reporting of faults:

All faults are to be reported to your supervisor immediately.

Minor faults will be rectified within 72 hours.

If a fault could affect the safe use of the forklift then the forklift is to have an "Out of Service" tag attached, the keys removed from the forklift, and the fault reported immediately to your supervisor. The fault must also be entered into the vehicle log book or sheet.

## 4. Hazard control strategies:

The forklift operator must continually look out for hazards. If a hazard can be easily rectified, e.g. a glut of wood laying on the ground, then the operator must remove that hazard immediately.

If the operator is unable to rectify a hazard, then it must be reported to your supervisor.

If a hazard is reported to a supervisor, the supervisor will organize temporary barriers and signage until the hazard is rectified.

All employees/contractors must keep a clean work area and not allow hazards to arise, e.g. Accumulation of rubbish or debris in pedestrian or forklift areas, items placed in areas that could create a hazard, etc.

## 5. Safe Operation:

Forklift operators must drive safely at all times. The operator must ensure the forklift can be brought to a safe stop at any time, taking into account the load, the operating surface and any other potential hazard in the work areas.

Prohibited practices are:

- excessive speed
- spinning the wheels
- unnecessary sharp braking
- unnecessary sharp cornering
- passengers riding on forklifts
- talking on a handheld phone while driving
- horseplay
- lifting or lowering loads near, or over the top of people
- carrying unsafe/unbalanced loads
- failing to wear the seat belt
- using the forklift for purposes that it was not designed for

- driving with restricted vision (if you cannot see, then drive in reverse or get assistance)
- driving unnecessarily with the load raised
- turning on inclines

#### Incidents and near misses

Any incidents and near misses are to be reported to your supervisor as soon as practical after the event occurring.

#### Mobile Phone

If you are permitted or required to use a mobile phone in the workplace you must do the following. When you need to use the phone for any function it is equipped for when operating a forklift, you must first bring the forklift to a safe stop in a safe place, lower the load or forks to the ground and apply the park brake before using the phone. Do not proceed until the phone has been returned to its normal position.

### **6. Pedestrians**

Forklift operators are to keep a constant lookout for pedestrians in the work areas, or pedestrians approaching the work area.

Pedestrians need to keep a constant lookout for forklifts in the work area, or forklifts approaching the work area. Pedestrians must be aware that the forklift operator may have areas of restricted vision and the forklift operator may not see them.

- 6.2 Pedestrians are not to approach forklifts unless they have made eye contact with the operator. The operator must stop the vehicle, lower the load or forks and apply the park brake before the pedestrian approaches. The forklift operator must not travel again until the pedestrian is a safe distance from the forklift, e.g. approximately three metres.

### **7. Parking and Shutdown:**

The operator must dismount safely. For larger machines the operator should face the machine and use "three point contact" at all times. For smaller machines the operator should step off the machine carefully. This is best done on the left hand side as there is a grab handle and the hydraulic levers are not in the way. If it is not practical to step off the left hand side, it is allowable to step off the right hand side with care. *The operator must never jump off the machine.* This can cause back injuries at the time, or lead to back injuries later in life

Forklifts must be parked in a safe place at all times.

For forklifts operated by LPG, the gas should be turned off at the end of the day

