



MAFES Dawg Tracks

March 24, 2014



*Safe Use of Forklifts
in Agriculture*



Forklifts have become common place in our agriculture systems. They provide the strength to make projects faster and easier to complete. However, they do pose some potential dangerous problems if they aren't used properly and maintained. Like an old adage says, "Knowledge is" and in this case "Knowledge is power" in the case of forklift usage. We should know and follow all the guidelines in the operation and maintenance of forklifts to avoid accidents.

I read a short story regarding forklift use and an accident that was caused by negligence in not thinking or observing a safety rule. A farmworker in an orchard was helping a forklift operator load boxes onto a pallet on the forklift's forks. They finished loading the boxes, so the operator told the worker to "hop on" and I'll give you a ride to the shed. The forklift operator was traveling to the shed at a high speed. He hit a hole in the road with his right front tire, throwing the worker off and under the left front tire. The worker ended up with a fractured left leg.

This incident or accident could have been avoided, if the operator had practiced just three basic safety rules of operating the forklift, or for that matter, most any rolling equipment. No extra riders are ever allowed on equipment made for only one person - the operator only. Secondly, loaded or empty, he should have been driving at a safe, controllable speed and not at "full throttle." Lastly, he should have been more observant to look for holes or other obstructions in the roadway.

SAFETY TIPS FOR AGRICULTURE FORKLIFT USE-

- ✓ Understand the features of the forklift. Each type has some features that are possibly not common to all models.
- ✓ Be familiar and practice acceptable driving skills, such as controllable speed, empty and with a load, keeping the bucket down load or close to the ground to prevent tipping or "bucking." Driving a forklift is totally different than operating a conventional vehicle.
- ✓ Load and unload with care. There are many steps involved in loading and unloading. Any one of these steps can cause an injury to the operator or the machine if the best management practices are not used.
- ✓ Forklifts should be operated at about 15 miles per hour or less. Speeding, especially at high speeds and on slippery or wet pavement, is an open invitation for a potential disaster.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FORKLIFT USE-

- ✓ Develop rules to operate and maintain forklifts safely.
- ✓ Train employees on the unique driving characteristics of each forklift.
- ✓ Provide the appropriate personal protective gear such as hard hats, safety glasses, face shields, hearing protection and wet weather gear.
- ✓ Supervise forklift operators continually.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FORKLIFT USE-

- ✓ Understand the operating characteristics of your forklift.
- ✓ Do not modify or remove the safety features of the forklift.
- ✓ "Buckle Up" your seat belt or restraints, if provided, before you even start the forklift.
- ✓ Keep bystanders out of your working area.
- ✓ Refrain from using attachments not authorized by the manufacturer.
- ✓ Always lower the forks to the ground and set the parking brake before you dismount the lift.
- ✓ Turn off the engine, cycle hydraulic controls, and remove ignition key before you leave the forklift unattended.
- ✓ Wear all the appropriate personal protective equipment required and provided by the employer.
- ✓ Check in all the areas where you will be operating the forklift for clearance of obstructions or other insufficient passage.
- ✓ Always turn off the engine before re-fueling and refrain from smoking during this period.
- ✓ Use the mounted hand-grips when dismounting and always refrain from jumping off.
- ✓ "ONE SEAT-ONE RIDER" is always in effect.

PRE-USE INSPECTION CHECK LIST-

Proper maintenance of the forklift will give you extreme months of service. To accomplish this, a daily maintenance inspection should be done before each use. The following items should be checked prior to each time of use:

- ✓ Fuel level and gauge
- ✓ Oil level
- ✓ Hydraulic oil level
- ✓ Power shift oil level
- ✓ Battery water level
- ✓ Visual inspection of battery for corrosion and loose terminals
- ✓ Coolant water level
- ✓ Inspect the fan belt
- ✓ Check brakes for proper operation-both service and parking
- ✓ Check lighting system - tail, head, turn and warning systems
- ✓ Check horn
- ✓ Check the hoist mechanism, chain bearings, and nuts
- ✓ Check lubrication
- ✓ Check forks for cracks, heel and tip wear, and alignment
- ✓ Check steering assembly
- ✓ Check the hydraulic controls
- ✓ Check tires for foreign objects in treads, proper inflation
- ✓ Do a visual inspection for oil, fuel, and exhaust leaks.

***DRIVE WITH REASON THROUGH
THE COMING SEASONS --
IT GETS YOU HOME SAFELY-
NOT JUST IN BASEBALL!***