

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Forklifts

Forklifts are a handy piece of equipment to have available. They can be used to move, raise, lower, or remove large objects or a number of smaller objects on pallets or in boxes, crates, or other containers.

New operators, and even experienced operators on unfamiliar equipment, need “seat time”. Supervisors should go over the controls, weight limits, workplace conditions & basic safety precautions. Allow operators some time to play; as with any equipment, becoming familiar and comfortable with its operation is essential. An open area with a few pallets, some time, and coaching will make a more capable, safer operator.

Hazards associated with forklifts are usually from the truck itself, workplace conditions, or operator error. The following safety rules should be reviewed regularly with new and experienced forklift operators...

Forklift specifics:

- Know the lift and load capacities; never exceed them (found on truck’s data plates or in manual).
- Pre-inspect before operation. Check fluids, grease as needed, or any other requirements according to the specific type of forklift. If problems are found, take out of service until repaired.
- Only use attachments approved by the manufacture.
- Do not modify forks or any other components on the machine.

Workplace conditions:

- Be aware of driving surface conditions. Holes, edges of concrete, and sloped areas can be hazardous and result in a lost load or worse.
- Pedestrians – Drive especially slow and cautious in areas where people are walking in the vicinity of operation. Injuries can occur when forklifts strike pedestrians or when pedestrians are struck by falling loads.
- Overhead clearances – Damage can occur to lights, stacks, doors, sprinklers, pipes. Do not travel with loads elevated.

Safe operation practices:

- Drive loaded trucks forward going up a ramp with the load upgrade and drive in reverse going down a ramp with the load upgrade.
- Never turn a forklift on a grade.
- If visibility is obstructed, drive in reverse.
- Proceed with caution when making turns. Anticipate the rear-end swing, especially when working in confined areas or narrow aisles.
- When parking, lower the forks, set parking brake, & turn engine off if out of sight or more than 25’ away.
- Never bump or ram loads into position with forks.
- Forks are not to be used as personnel elevators.
- No person should be allowed to stand or pass under elevated forks, whether loaded or empty.

In case of a tip over:

- Don't jump. Stay in the forklift.
- Hold tight to the steering wheel.
- Brace feet.
- Lean AWAY from the impact.

For more info contact – Leslie Woolington
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Sources: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools>