



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

Forklifts are the ultimate “work smart not hard” machines to move loads of material around. New operators, and even experienced operators on unfamiliar equipment, need “seat time”.

Operators must always be given time to become familiar and comfortable with any equipment they are required to operate. Supervisors should go over the controls, weight limits, workplace conditions & basic safety precautions. An open practice area with a few pallets, obstacles, and coaching from an experienced operator will make a more confident, capable and therefore safer, new forklift 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). Understand that the higher a load is raised, the less weight the machine can handle safely.
- 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 it out of service until repaired.
- Only use attachments approved by the manufacture. Do not modify forks or any other components on the machine.

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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. Never allow a person to walk under a raised load or between a forklift in operation and a stationary object.
- Overhead clearances – Damage can occur to lights, stacks, doors, sprinklers, pipes. Do not travel with loads elevated.

Safe operation practices:

- Always wear the seatbelt!
- Drive loaded forklifts 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 the forks.
- Forks are not to be used as personnel elevators.

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.

Sources:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools>