

Safe Use of Agriculture Forklifts

While an agricultural forklift provides superhuman strength to make work faster and easier, it can also pose serious danger to users who don't operate it safely. Knowledge is power when it comes to forklifts, so know and follow all safety guidelines to avoid accidents.

TRUE STORY

A farm worker on an orchard was helping a forklift operator load boxes onto a pallet on the forklift's forks. When they completed loading the boxes, the forklift operator gave his co-worker a ride and they headed to the equipment storage shed. Traveling at high speed, the forklift's front right tire struck a large hole in the pavement. This bounced the forklift, throwing the co-worker underneath the left front tire and fracturing his left leg.

What could have prevented this accident?

- Forbid extra riders on agricultural forklifts. .
- Operate forklifts at a safe speed.
- Watch for holes and obstructions when operating a forklift.

Safety Tips for Agricultural Forklifts

- Understand your forklift's special features. Each one comes with different lifting capacities and driving characteristics.
- Learn special driving skills, like keeping loads low and avoiding sharp turns. Driving a forklift is not the same as driving a car.
- Load and unload with care. With so many steps involved, loading and unloading can cause work injuries and property damage.
- Drive forklifts below 15 m.p.h. Speeding, especially on wet or slippery pavement, invites disaster.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

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

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- Supervise forklift operators continually.

Employee:

- Understand the operating characteristics of your forklift.
- Never modify or remove a forklift's safety features.
- Buckle your seatbelt and/or restraints (if provided) before you operate your forklift.
- Keep others away from your operating area.
- Never use attachments unless specifically authorized by the forklift manufacturer.
- Always lower the forks to the ground and set the parking brakes before dismounting.
- Turn off the engine, cycle hydraulic controls, and remove ignition keys before you leave the forklift unattended.
- Wear all protective clothing and equipment that your supervisor provides to you.
- Check the clearance of all doorways, canopies, and overheads.
- Turn off your forklift's engine when refueling and use caution. Never smoke when refueling.
- Use hand-grips to dismount. Never jump from the forklift when dismounting.
- Never permit riders. Only the operator belongs on a forklift.

Check your forklift before starting:

Employee:

- Test the controls.
- Check all gauges and lights.
- Check the horn and backup alarm, if provided
- Check hand and foot brakes.

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