



RSD STAFFING

Forklift & Powered Industrial Truck Safety Guide

Associate Safety Guide

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About This Guide

This guide gives RSD Staffing associates a plain-language overview of how powered industrial trucks — commonly called forklifts — are operated safely. It is awareness-level information to help you understand what safe operation looks like, whether you drive one or work nearby.

This guide does not certify anyone to operate a forklift. Under OSHA, only your host employer can train, evaluate, and authorize a person to operate a specific truck. Never operate a forklift until the site employer has trained and certified you on it.

Before You Operate: Training & Authorization

Running a forklift takes more than knowing how to drive. Employers must train operators on the specific type of truck and the workplace, evaluate their performance, and re-evaluate them at least once every three years. Refresher training is also required after any accident, near-miss, unsafe operation, or major change in the equipment or conditions.

- Operate only the trucks you have been trained, evaluated, and authorized to use.
- Know your specific truck — controls differ between models, and attachments change how it handles.
- If you have not been certified on a machine, do not operate it. Tell your supervisor or RSD.

Pre-Shift Inspection

Inspect the truck before each shift, and never use one that is unsafe. Take it out of service and report any problem you find. At a minimum, check:

- Tires, forks, mast, lift chains, and the overhead guard for damage or cracks.
- Fluid levels (fuel, oil, coolant, hydraulic) and any leaks under the truck.
- Brakes, steering, horn, lights, backup alarm, and gauges.
- Seat belt condition and that the data / capacity plate is legible.
- Battery or fuel connections, and that the load backrest and any attachment are secure.

If any item fails inspection, tag the truck out of service and tell your supervisor. Do not 'run it just for now.'

Safe Operating Rules

- Buckle the seat belt before you move, every time.
- Keep your whole body inside the operator area — never put an arm, leg, or head outside the frame.
- Look in the direction you are traveling; if the load blocks your view, travel in reverse.
- Travel with the forks low and tilted back, whether loaded or empty.
- Obey speed limits, slow at corners, and sound the horn at intersections and blind spots.
- Keep a safe distance from other trucks and do not pass in blind or tight areas.

- No passengers, and no one on the forks — unless a proper, secured work platform is used.
- Cross dock plates and rough spots slowly, and take them squarely.

| Load Handling

- Never exceed the truck's rated capacity shown on the data plate. Attachments lower that limit.
- Center the load, seat it against the backrest, and tilt the mast back for stability.
- Raise and lower loads only when stopped; do not travel with the load held high.
- On ramps and inclines, keep the load pointed uphill and do not turn or angle across the slope.
- Make sure loads are stacked and secured so they will not shift or fall.
- Keep people clear of the load — no one walks or stands under raised forks.

| Pedestrians & Shared Spaces

Most serious forklift incidents involve people on foot. Drive as if a pedestrian could step out at any moment.

- Yield the right-of-way to people on foot.
- Slow down and sound the horn at doorways, aisle ends, and blind corners.
- Make eye contact before you pass someone or expect them to move.
- Keep a clear zone around the truck, and stop if someone enters it.

| Refueling & Battery Charging

Fuel and batteries add fire, burn, and explosion hazards. Follow the site's procedures and only refuel or charge in the designated area.

- Turn the engine off before refueling, and never smoke near fuel or batteries.
- For propane (LP) trucks, check the connection and hose for leaks and secure the tank correctly.
- Charge electric-truck batteries in a well-ventilated area — charging gives off hydrogen gas, which can explode near a spark or flame.
- Wear the protective gear provided when handling batteries, and know where the eyewash station is in case of acid contact.
- Set the brake and follow the shutdown steps before connecting a charger.

| Parking & Shutting Down

- Park only in approved areas — never blocking exits, aisles, fire equipment, or electrical panels.
- Lower the forks flat to the floor and tilt them down.
- Shift to neutral, set the parking brake, and turn the key off.
- On any incline, block the wheels.
- Mount and dismount facing the truck with three points of contact — never jump off.

Operator Quick Rules

- Only drive trucks you are certified and authorized to operate.
- Inspect before every shift; tag out anything unsafe.
- Seat belt on, body inside, eyes on your path.
- Forks low and tilted back when traveling.
- Stay within the rated capacity; keep loads low and stable.
- Yield to people on foot; sound the horn at corners and doorways.
- Refuel and charge only in the right place — engine off, no sparks.
- Park flat, neutral, brake set, key off, wheels blocked on a slope.

If you are ever unsure whether an action is safe, stop and ask. Report every accident and near-miss.