

## Forklift Safety Practices

These are some common safety rules you must be aware of and follow when operating a forklift:

- Always wear a seat belt when operating a forklift—accidents do happen.
- When driving with a load, make sure you drive forward when going up the incline and backward when going down the incline.
- When driving the forklift without a load, make sure the forks are kept four to six inches off the ground.
- Make sure no one walks underneath a raised load.
- Never go around a blind corner before checking first and use the horn when necessary.
- When carrying a high load that blocks your vision, drive the forklift in reverse and turn your head around so you can see.
- When operating around other forklifts try to keep your distance from each other (about 3 forklift lengths).
- Never drive up behind someone unaware you are there.
- When you park a forklift or leave it unattended, make sure the forks are flat on the ground, the controls set to neutral, and the parking brake is on.
- Make sure you have completed the forklift training and your supervisor has completed the Forklift Operator Evaluation and Certification process before using a forklift: <https://iws.support/forms>
- Make eye contact with people around you while operating the forklift.

## How to Properly Operate a Forklift

Let's put what we have discussed into action. Here is an example of what to do when operating a forklift to ensure you and your co-workers stay safe.

### Preparation

Before you pick up a load make sure that:

- The load is securely arranged and stable.
- The load should not be damaged in any way.
- Make sure the weight of the load is centered. If it cannot be centered, you'll need to be extra careful when moving it.
- The heaviest part of the load should be placed on first/closest to the forklift's front wheels.
- Make sure the forklift isn't overloaded—check the stated capacity for the forklift you're operating.
- When necessary, use the load extension backrest.

### Approaching the Load

Once you know the load is safe, you then need to safely get in the forklift, and when approaching the load, make sure you:

- Drive up to the load and stop about 8 to 12 inches in front of it.
- Make sure you are squarely in front of the load and that the forks are at the right height.
- Set direction control to neutral.
- Make sure that you don't raise or lower the forks unless the brake is on.

### Fork Position

Now that you're in position, make sure that:

- The forks are level before inserting them into the pallet.
- The forks are placed as far under the load as possible.
- When you slide the forks into the pallet or under the load make sure they are fully under the load. The forks need to be at minimum two-thirds the length of the load you are lifting.
- Make sure the weight of the load is centered between the forks and distributed as evenly as possible. You can also tilt the mast back to stabilize the load.

### Lifting the Load

Once the forks are in place, it's time to lift the load. Before doing so, make sure that:

- You check whether there is enough space overhead for the load after you lift it.
- You can then carefully lift the load up—about 4 inches above the lower stack.
- When you lift the load, tilt the mast back slightly so you can rest the load against the backrest extension.
- Finally, slowly put the lift control lever into the neutral position.

Once you've successfully lifted the load, move it to its destination safely- adhering to the safety tips outlined above.

### Forklift Certification

- Forklift operators must be current on their annual safety training (safety orientation)
- Employees must complete the online [Forklift Operator Training](#) with a score of 100%:
- Forklift Operator candidates who have completed their training must complete a hands-on forklift demonstration, presented by a qualified employee.
- Finally, the candidate must complete an onsite [Forklift Operator Evaluation & Certification](#) test provided by a qualified employee.