



With the harvest season right around the corner, many operations will see an uptick in activity at their facility. This includes more forklifts operating at full speed with pedestrian traffic around. Forklifts are extremely heavy vehicles, capable of causing severe injury and death when not handled properly or treated with caution in their operating space. In the US alone, forklift accidents leave an average of 95 people each day with serious injuries. Even worse, one person dies from these injuries every four days. Over one third of all forklift-related fatalities (36%) are pedestrians. This month's Safety Alert shares some tips on how you can make your workplace safer for pedestrians and forklifts.

Pedestrians and Forklifts

As an operator of a powered industrial truck, you must always safeguard other employees. This rule is no different than what is required of you as a safe driver when you are operating your own car. Pedestrians, whether they are walking down the aisle of a plant or walking down a city street, are no match against moving steel.

As a matter of fact, as pedestrians, your fellow employees are probably much more aware of the dangers involved in being hit by a car as it drives past them than they are aware of the dangers involved in being hit or crushed by a powered industrial truck as it goes by them at work. If you are driving your truck down a narrow aisle and there is a pedestrian in the aisle who steps to the side to let you by, are you positive that there is enough clearance for you to get by? Remember, you are responsible for safety.

It is important to re-iterate, as an operator of a powered industrial truck, you must always safeguard other employees. That responsibility is part of your job.

In 2023, an estimated 9,076 pedestrians died in traffic and non-traffic incidents,

Safety Rules:

- Don't let friends drive your truck so they can see what it feels like. You are letting them put themselves and other workers in danger if you do.
- Another factor in the safety of pedestrians is speed.
 - Travel at a safe speed, suitable to the surroundings and the type of load you are carrying.
 - Don't ever become a race driver down aisles or elsewhere.
 - Take your time and drive safely.
- If the floors you are driving across are wet or slippery, drive at a slow speed. This is the same as on a highway in your own car. Conditions determine the speed you should travel.
- Slow down and sound your warning device at cross aisles and other locations where your vision is obstructed by fixed objects.
 - Let others know you are coming.

- On level areas, travel only high enough to clear obstacles on the floor or roadway.
- When you are moving loads which block your forward visibility, drive the truck with the load trailing. If you can't see where you are going, you're headed for an accident.
- Watch for pedestrians; sound your horn to warn them that you are approaching. Be careful not to sneak up and then scare them. They may suddenly move into your path.
- Look behind you before backing up. Something may be there now that wasn't there a few moments before.
- Treat blind corners and doorways as "Stop Streets." Running these stop signs is just as much a hazard as doing it on a city street.
- Don't drive your truck up to anyone who is standing in front of a bench or other fixed object. If your brakes fail, a serious accident could occur.
- Don't allow anyone to stand or pass under the elevated portion of your truck, whether it is loaded or empty. If they don't listen, tell your supervisor.
- And of course, stunt driving and horseplay are never permitted. This is a place to work not a playground.

If we all follow these safety rules, we should be able to avoid accidents and protect fellow employees. The responsibility for safety belongs to everyone. By being a safe powered industrial truck driver you are doing your part to make this a safe place to work.

Pedestrian Safety:

As a pedestrian in a forklift environment, it's your responsibility to keep yourself safe. Anyone who runs a warehouse or industrial facility understands the dangers and trains his or her drivers. But the pedestrians, the order pickers, the managers, and vendors who sometimes roam your facility also need to be trained.

Pedestrians need to maintain a respectful distance around forklifts. In doing so, pedestrians heavily rely on vision and hearing; however, those faculties have their limits, which should be acknowledged and augmented.

Pedestrians should understand the operating characteristics of lift trucks when working in their proximity and should understand and follow pedestrian rules that are established for their specific environment by their employers.

Rules for Pedestrians:

- Pedestrians should stop or slow down at blind intersections.
- Pedestrians should stay out of the path of the lift truck no matter who has the right of way.
- Watch for the forks of the lift truck as well as movements that may endanger you as you walk.
- Never walk or stand under a lift mechanism or hitch a ride on a forklift.
- Never ride on any part of the lift truck except in the operator's seat.
- Never engage in horseplay in areas where lift trucks are operating.
- By following each of these commonsense rules, you will make yourself more visible to forklift drivers and avoid becoming a "near-fatality."

“Weekly Safety Meeting – Pedestrians and Forklifts.” *Safety Matters Weekly*, 29 Dec. 2024, safetymattersweekly.com/weekly-safety-meeting-pedestrians-and-forklifts/.

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