



Forklift Operator Training

What you need to know

Forklifts can present many different operating hazards in the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires you to ensure that each forklift operator can operate them safely. Here are some things you need to know.

What training does OSHA require?

The OSHA requirements allow you to tailor a training program to the characteristics of your workplace and the particular types of powered industrial trucks you use. Training programs for forklift operators must include a combination of formal instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning and written material), practical training (demonstrations and exercises performed by the trainee) and evaluation of the operator's performance in the workplace.

The training program must also include the general safe forklift operation principles, safety hazards that forklifts can create in the workplace and safety requirements of the OSHA standard on powered industrial trucks.

OSHA provides a list of training topics that you can include in your program, such as:

- Vehicle capacity and stability
- Operating instructions
- Vehicle inspection and maintenance requirements
- Load manipulation, stacking and unstacking
- Pedestrian traffic in areas where the vehicle will be operated
- Operating in narrow aisles and restricted places
- The requirements of OSHA's forklift standard for your industry

Who can train, evaluate and certify forklift operators?

OSHA requires that the person providing the forklift training and evaluation have the "knowledge, training skills and experience" to educate operators and evaluate their competence. The OSHA standard does not further define this requirement or set any specific certifications. It is your responsibility to determine who is qualified to conduct the training.

OSHA does not require accreditation of the trainer, stating that trainers and evaluators with different backgrounds can achieve the level of ability necessary to teach and evaluate trainees. This can be the employer, an employee or an outside training source.

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How can an employer determine the qualifications of trainers?

An example of a qualified trainer is a person who by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by knowledge, training and experience, has demonstrated the ability to train and evaluate powered industrial truck operators.

Can the person providing the training come from outside the company?

Yes, the employer may authorize a trainer from outside the company such as a training consultant or a manufacturer's representative to conduct the training. The employer must have evidence that the operators have been trained in the required program topics. An employer may also use an employee who has the knowledge, training, and experience to provide training and evaluation.

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After the training, you must evaluate and certify that your forklift operators have received proper training and can safely operate a forklift. **Each operator must be evaluated once every three years.**

What type of records or documentation must employers keep?

Employers must document that each operator has completed the required training. This written certification record must include:

- Name of operator
- Date of the training
- Date of the evaluation
- Name of the person(s) who conducted the training or evaluation

OSHA does not require an operating license for forklift operators.

How long must employers keep certification records?

Certification records for each operator must be kept for three years. Employers who evaluate operators more

frequently may retain the most recent certification.

How often must refresher training be given?

Refresher training needs to be conducted only when forklift operators:

- Are found to be operating the vehicle unsafely,
- Have been in an accident or near-miss incident,
- Receive a poor evaluation, or
- When there are changes in the workplace or type of truck the operator will be driving.

This flyer is intended as a general description of training requirements. For more detailed information, consult the OSHA standards at www.osha.gov. Source: OSHA

It is a violation of federal law for anyone under 18 years of age to operate a forklift or for anyone over 18 years of age who is not properly trained and certified to do so.



Training Resources

Many online safety resources are available to assist employers with forklift operator training. Here are just a few:

- www.free-training.com
- www.nsc.org
- www.jjkeller.com
- www.certifyme.net
- www.forkliftsafety.com

You can also contact your forklift dealer for training. For additional resources or questions, contact Summit's Loss Prevention team at 1-800-282-7648.



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