

Powered Industrial Truck Safety – Forklifts

At 8 tons, Powered Industrial Trucks, or forklifts, weigh 2 to 3 times more than most cars. Government Safety Regulations require that forklift drivers be trained and evaluated on the training they receive. Forklifts make material handling jobs easier. Learning the skills to operate these vehicles makes the job safer.

The Cal-OSHA Regulation (General Industry Safety Order Section 3668) clearly states that it is the employer's responsibility to train and evaluate each forklift operator and new employee operator regardless of an employee's prior experience or training.

You, the employer, are required to show proof that each operator has been properly trained and evaluated. This means that in the event of a Cal/OSHA audit or investigation, your company is to provide documentation for each employee who is authorized to operate your forklifts. According to the law, an evaluation of each operator's performance must be conducted at least every 3 years.

Refresher training and evaluation must be conducted under the following conditions:

- If an operator has been observed operating the forklift in an unsafe manner,
- If an operator is involved in an accident or near miss incident,
- If an operator has received an evaluation that reveals he/she is not operating the forklift in a safe manner,
- If an operator is assigned to drive a different type of forklift, or
- If a condition in the workplace changes in a manner that could affect safe operation of a forklift.

The trainer must be a person who has knowledge, training, and experience to train operators and evaluate their competence. Trainees may operate a forklift only under direct supervision of an authorized trainer and where such training does not endanger the trainee or other employees. Employees must be over the age of 18 years to operate a forklift.

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Operator training must consist of a combination of formal instruction, practical training, and an evaluation of the operator's performance in the workplace. Specific Truck and Workplace related topics must be addressed as indicated under GISO Section 3668. Proper safety training & practices will reduce accidents, injuries, liability, and costly repairs.

If your company operates forklifts, it is required that you post the Operating Rules for Industrial Trucks (GISO 3664) in your facility where employees can see it.

http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/IndTrucks_Eng.pdf

http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/IndTrucks_Spa.pdf

Nonmoving forklifts can also be dangerous. Ensure that employees keep a distance while working in the vicinity of forklifts and never walk under the elevated load of a forklift. Walk only in designated aisles and avoid shortcuts.

Lastly, Powered Industrial Trucks may not be used in atmospheres containing hazardous concentrations of certain flammable gases, and vapors. Review the Title 8 Regulation Section 3650(g) and assess the potential hazards in your workplace.