

Forklift Safety and Compliance

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Each year, forklift incidents injure thousands of people and cause millions of dollars in damaged property. Unfortunately, most of these incidents could have been prevented with operator training, procedures, and most importantly accountability.

Training is especially important for those who operate a Class 7 forklift, commonly known as a telehandler, Lull, Boom lift, and so on. OSHA's Rule 1910.178 (I) requires operators of these forklifts to pass a safety training class before they move a single load of drywall or bricks.



This rule clearly states it is the responsibility of the operator's employer to provide the required safety training. While attending a training course goes a long way toward safe telehandler operation, the person behind the wheel is ultimately responsible for safe operation of the machine. With this in mind the following points have been included in this article to help reduce the risk of forklift incidents:

1) Conduct a pre-start check:

- Before starting work on a job site, check the entire work area. Conducting a visual inspection of the work site can be crucial to determining where there may be potential hazards during pick-up, transport or drop-off. Rarely do construction sites have a smooth surface on which to drive. Potholes, irregular terrain, mud holes, piles of material, construction debris and water are just some of the terrain obstacles that may be present. In addition to checking a job site, the operator must also check the machine for damage to the forks, hydraulics, tires, and so on.

2) Load Pick-Up:

- Any load — whether it is drywall, bricks, lumber, trusses, concrete block, or any other construction material — should be matched to the right machine. That means the operator must study and obey the lift charts inside the cab. Most telehandlers have gauges and indicators on the boom that correspond to marks or letters on the lift chart, letting the operator know how much weight can be lifted to maximum elevation. By knowing the weight of the load, in addition to the height needed to reach, operators can easily determine if the machine is capable of lifting an object.

3) Wear your seat belt:

- Lastly, the simplest, yet most important rule operators must follow is to always have their seatbelt fastened. Doing so will keep the operator within the roll over protection in the case of a tip-over.