J. J. Keller’s
5-Minute
Workplace Safety Talks
Introduction

Safety training is a critical component of your workplace safety program. You cannot expect your employees to work in a safe manner if you don’t explain what they need to do and how to do it. Your safety training program is the way management provides required OSHA safety instruction and information on specific workplace hazards.

Your training program not only lets employees understand that the employer is serious about their health and welfare, but also helps to instill the company’s safety culture. These 5-Minute Workplace safety talks can be used as refreshers of previous training, as a reminder of specific hazards your employees may face on the job, or as introductions to more in-depth workplace specific training subjects.

_J. J. Keller’s 5-Minute Workplace Safety Talks_ assists you by providing tools you need to conduct employee safety talks. Such training sessions, usually 5-15 minutes long and conducted weekly at the start of the shift, are a popular and widely used means to convey safety information. This product is designed specifically for use in these types of training sessions. However, the information included here can also be used when preparing other, more in-depth training sessions.

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In 1998, OSHA revised §1910.178(l)—Operator training, to include specific operator training requirements. Vehicles covered may be referred to as: high light trucks, counterbalanced trucks, cantilever trucks, rider trucks, high lift platform trucks, low lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, pallet trucks, high lift order picker rider trucks, motorized hand/rider trucks, as well as forklifts.

Although very useful vehicles, forklifts are involved in many workplace injuries and accidents, most often due to improper use.

Training and evaluation

The employer must ensure that each powered industrial truck operator is competent to operate a powered industrial truck safely, as demonstrated by the successful completion of the required training and evaluation.

Operators must have both formal instruction and practical training. Drivers must successfully complete the training and an evaluation before they are allowed to operate a truck without direct supervision.

Refresher training and reevaluations can be triggered by: accidents, near-misses, assignments to a different type of truck, changes in the work environment that have an effect on forklift safety, observations of unsafe operation, or evaluations that reveal a need for training.

Each operator must have an evaluation at least every three years. When the evaluation finds that the operator is competent in any of the required topics, he or she does not need additional training in those topics.

Employee Training

Specific OSHA training requirements are found at §1910.178(l). You must ensure that each operator is competent to operate a powered industrial truck safely, as demonstrated by the successful completion of the training and evaluation specified in the above reference.

Training Tips

Review the new standard with your employees. Discuss the requirements for the forklift training based on the type of forklift the driver will be operating and the need to be evaluated in the environment the driver will be operating in.

Record training using the generic Training Session Log, found in Getting The Most From Your Safety Training, page 6.

Where to go for more information

Overview
Forklifts are one type of powered industrial truck used in industry. Other types of powered industrial trucks include platform lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, tractors, and other trucks that are powered by an electric motor or internal combustion engine.

Although an essential tool, the forklift is involved in many workplace injuries and accidents that cause property damage and machine downtime. These accidents are most often due to improper use. Therefore, OSHA mandates the training and evaluation of all operators on the safe and proper use of forklifts.

Forklift related injuries
OSHA estimates that there are nearly 1 million forklifts and nearly 1.5 million forklift operators working nation-wide. There are, on average, 101 fatalities and 94,570 injuries annually due to unsafe forklift operations. The most common forklift accidents involve:

- Tipovers.
- Being crushed between the vehicle and a surface.
- Being struck by the vehicle or by part of the load.
- Falling from a platform held aloft by the forklift.
- Running the forklift off of a loading dock or other raised surface.

What must my employer do?
The employer must ensure that each industrial truck operator:

- Is competent to operate powered industrial truck safely.
- Have successfully completed the required training and evaluation.
- Has had both formal instruction and practical training.

Refresher training and reevaluations can be triggered by:

- Accidents,
- Near-misses,
- Assignments to a different type of truck,
- Changes in the work environment that have an effect on forklift safety,
- Observation of unsafe operations, or
- Evaluations which reveal a need for more training.
Charging batteries, and replacing battery electrolyte, can create a variety of hazards. Explosive hydrogen, acidic liquids and vapors, electrical burns, and strains, sprains, and other physical injuries can all arise from servicing batteries.

What is electrolyte
Electrolyte is created by adding sulfuric acid to water, never the other way around. OSHA covers this at 29 CFR 1910.178(g)(7).

Charging the battery
When the battery needs charging:
- Make sure that your employees are performing the battery charging in an area that is designated for that purpose.
- Keep the vent caps in place to avoid electrolyte spray.
- Maintain the vent caps in functioning condition.

Employee Training
The OSHA rules require the following training for employees:
- Only employees qualified by training or experience can operate equipment and machinery.
- Employees must be trained to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to their work environment to control or eliminate the hazards.

Training Tips
Identify the area(s) in the facility that have been designated as battery changing and charging areas.
Review the employee handout. Review the battery manufacturer’s literature for proper maintenance procedures.
Demonstrate the correct battery charging procedures. Demonstrate how the battery handling equipment is to be used. Also demonstrate how to add fluid to a battery, if that procedure is done by employees.
Make sure employees know the location of the emergency eyewash/shower station in case of acid splash or spill.
Record training using the generic Training Session Log, found in Getting The Most From Your Safety Training, page 6.

Where to go for more information
29 CFR 1910.178(g)—Changing and charging storage batteries.
Overview

Do you pour acid into water, or is it water into acid? According to OSHA's forklift regulation, when adding fluid to a battery, acid is to be poured into water, never water into acid.

What is electrolyte?

Electrolyte is a substance that conducts electricity when it is dissolved in water. Pure water by itself will not carry an electric current, but by adding sulfuric acid to the water, an electrolyte solution is created that allows the electric current to pass. Concentrated sulfuric acid is mixed with distilled water to make the electrolyte solution that surrounds the electrodes in battery cells. This process is necessary for the battery to produce energy to drive the engine.

What are the hazards?

The chemical reaction of mixing sulfuric acid with water can create a violent reaction, resulting in the generation of heat. Because of this reaction, when mixing an electrolyte solution for forklift batteries, always add acid to the water to avoid the hazard of smoking and splattering.

Transferring acid

Use a siphon or tilter when transferring acid from a container because it is much easier to control, making less chance for spilling or splashing. Also, during this procedure, it’s essential to wear PPE such as gloves, long sleeves, and goggles or face shield because splashed acid will eat holes in clothing and skin.

Low electrolyte levels

When the electrolyte level is low:

- Clean off the top of the battery.
- Remove the battery filter caps and add distilled water to the cells.
- Tighten the caps securely after the cells are filled.

If the fluid level in the cells is low, add distilled water before charging. Never add water immediately after a charge. Tools and other metallic objects shall be kept away from the top of uncovered batteries.

Charging the battery

- Perform the battery charging in an area that is designated for that purpose.
- Keep the vent caps in place to avoid electrolyte spray.
- Maintain the vent caps in functioning condition.
- Smoking is prohibited in the charging area.

The job of checking and charging batteries that contain sulfuric acid is a serious task. If you have any questions, make sure you talk to your supervisor.
| The Citations | OSHA cited a Midwestern company for two alleged serious safety and health violations and proposed penalties totaling $6,500. An employee died after a forklift overturned and pinned the employee under the overhead protective cage. The serious violations relate to a lack of proper training of powered industrial truck operators, as well as a lack of truck seat belt use. OSHA issues a serious citation when death or serious physical harm is likely to result from a hazard about which an employer knew or should have known. One of the most common sights in an industrial setting is the powered industrial truck. Whether it is a tow motor, order picker, motorized pallet jack, or forklift, it is the most versatile material handling equipment. Forklifts are wonderful tools for moving and stocking material. These trucks can be powered by propane gas, electric power, or diesel fuel. Because these trucks most often operate in areas where other people are working, there is a potential for accidents involving both the forklift operator and pedestrians. |
| Training Guidelines | Here is a brief talk geared to give you a fresh approach to training on this topic. **Step one** Review the general requirements for forklift training and operation, especially as they apply to your workplace. **Step two** Explain the specific requirements for forklift training. Training provides a person with the necessary specialized instruction and practice to become proficient at a particular task. It is the means by which an employer ensures that employees have the knowledge and skills they need to do their jobs correctly and safely. The alternative to formal training is learning by trial and error, an approach that results in an inadequate knowledge base and relies on mistakes (which often involve accidents, injuries, and near-miss incidents) for learning to occur. Reliance on this approach creates a greater chance of injuries and fatalities. After employees have received initial training, acquired the basic knowledge, and perfected their operating skills, the employer may rely on refresher training to: |
• Reinforce or improve the employee’s knowledge of the basic training material;
• Impart new information;
• Teach material in a new manner; or
• Maintain an acceptable level of awareness of workplace conditions, operating hazards, and truck-related characteristics.

Step three
Discuss proper safety operation measures to use while operating a powered industrial truck, such as:
• Use of seatbelts;
• Travel speed;
• Use of horn at corners;
• Policy on riders; and
• Traveling with a load.

Step four
Review any forklift driving rules for the facility.
Overview Of Topic

One of the most common sights in the workplace is a powered industrial truck - a forklift. Forklifts are one of the most versatile pieces of material handling equipment we use. Although very useful vehicles, forklifts are involved in many workplace injuries and accidents, most often due to improper use.

It happened like this

Ed was assigned to drive a new forklift one day. Even though he had never operated this type of truck, he was an experienced forklift operator, so he wasn’t concerned.

“Ed, can you drive this forklift?” asked the supervisor.

“Oh, sure. It isn’t all that different from the old one,” Ed told him.

“By the way, they moved some storage racks around in that area next to the production line. Watch it when you drive over that way,” the supervisor told him.

Ed started the truck up and went on his way. Later, a co-worker stopped Ed.

“I need to get up to that top rack,” his coworker said, “give a lift up, will you?”

“Can’t ride on the forks,” Ed told him.

“Here,” the co-worker said, “let me put this pallet on the forks. It’ll work just fine.”

Ed lifted the co-worker up to the top rack so that he could complete his task. After he was done, Ed lowered the co-worker back down.

“You aren’t wearing your seatbelt,” the co-worker said.

“Yeah, but it’s okay,” Ed told him, “since I get on and off the truck all the time, I don’t have to wear it.”

“Hey, give me a lift over to the shipping dock, would you?” the co-worker asked.
“Hop on,” Ed told him, as the co-worker squeezed onto the forklift next to Ed.

**Let’s talk about this, OK?**

What did the supervisor do wrong?

- Assigned Ed to drive a forklift he wasn’t familiar with.
- Didn’t provide enough information on potential changes in the workplace that could affect safe forklift operation.

What did the co-worker do wrong?

- Asked Ed to lift him up using a pallet instead of a cage.
- Asked for a ride to the shipping dock.

What did Ed do wrong?

- Agreed to drive a forklift he wasn’t familiar with, and may not have been trained on.
- Elevated the co-worker without a proper cage.
- Did not wear his seatbelt.
- Allowed a co-worker to ride on the truck.

**What do you think should happen next?**

- Ed must be retrained on proper forklift operation
- Ed must be retrained on safe forklift work processes, such as wearing a seatbelt and not allowing riders.
- The supervisor should be trained on OSHA’s requirements for powered industrial truck operators.

**Training Tips**

Review the training requirement found in 1910.178(l) - Operator training.

Review with the trainees common causes of forklift accidents. Ask the attendees if they have had or have witnessed accidents or near-accidents and what the causes may have been.

Review with the trainees what things trigger re-training, based upon the information in 1910.178(l).
Powered Industrial Trucks—Forklift Operation—Real Life Stories

Overview
One of the most common sights in the workplace is a powered industrial truck - a forklift. Forklifts are one of the most versatile pieces of material handling. Although very useful vehicles, forklifts are involved in many workplace injuries and accidents, most often due to improper use.

Let’s talk about this, OK?
What did the supervisor do wrong?
What did the co-worker do wrong?
What did Ed do wrong?
What happens next?

Additional information and review
The employer must ensure that each industrial truck operator:

• is competent to operate powered industrial truck safely.
• have successfully completed the required training and evaluation.
• has had both formal instruction and practical training.
This sign-off sheet documents the employees at this company, ________________________, who have taken part in a training session on Powered Industrial Trucks—Forklift Operation—Real Life Stories. At this training session, we covered:

- The causes of common forklift accidents.
- Forklift safety rules.
- OSHA’s forklift operator training requirements.

The space below is for employees to “sign off” that they were in attendance.

Date of Training: _______________________  Job Location: _______________________

Employee Signature

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Print Name Here

________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Supervisor’s Signature

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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