



Forklift Operator Safety

Northern Illinois University

Review and Updates

| Date | Reviewed by | Changes Made |
|-------------|--------------------|---|
| 9/1/15 | Mary Schlagel | Multiple updates throughout the program |
| 6/23/16 | Mary Schlagel | Updated forms, Responsibilities, Battery Charging & Changing. |
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Purpose

This written Forklift Operation Program establishes guidelines to be followed whenever employees or students operate powered industrial trucks at Northern Illinois University. These guidelines are established in order to:

- Provide a safe working environment.
- Govern safe operator use of powered industrial trucks.
- Ensure proper care and maintenance of powered industrial trucks.

The procedures here establish uniform recommendations designed to ensure that powered industrial truck safety training, operation, and maintenance practices are communicated to and understood by the affected employees. These recommendations also are designed to ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard the health and safety of all employees.

Applicable Regulations and Standards

It is the university's intent to comply with the requirements of Occupational Safety and Health Administration as well as ASME/ANSI recommendations. These specifically are:

- 29 CFR 1926.600 Equipment
- 29 CFR 1926.602(c) Lifting and Hauling Equipment
- 29 CFR 1926.441 Batteries and Battery Handling
- 29 CFR 1910.176 Handling Materials, General
- 29 CFR 1910.178 Powered Industrial Truck
- 29 CFR 1910.441 Battery Changing and Charging
- ASME/ANSI B56.1-1969, Safety Standard for Low Lift and High Lift Trucks.
- OSH Act of 1970 General Duty Clause Section 5

Scope

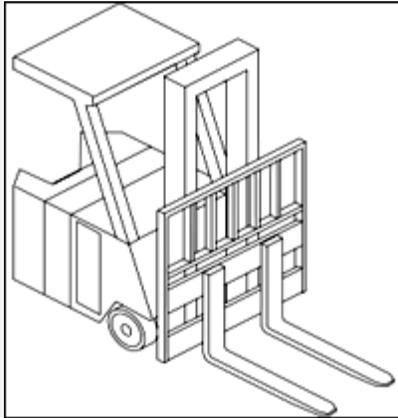
This program applies to all powered industrial trucks being operated by NIU personnel or labor contractors regardless of location. Types of lifts are:

- Class I: Electric Motor Rider Trucks
- Class II: Electric Motor Narrow Aisle Trucks
- Class III: Electric Motor Hand Trucks or Hand/Rider Trucks
- Class IV: Internal Combustion Engine Trucks (Solid/Cushion Tires)
- Class V: Internal Combustion Engine Trucks (Pneumatic Tires)
- Class VI: Electric and Internal Combustion Engine Tractors
- Class VII: Rough Terrain Forklift Trucks

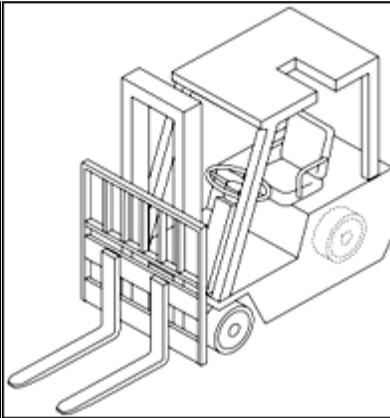
NIU uses many but not all of these types of forklifts/powered industrial vehicles.

Class I: Electric Motor Rider Trucks

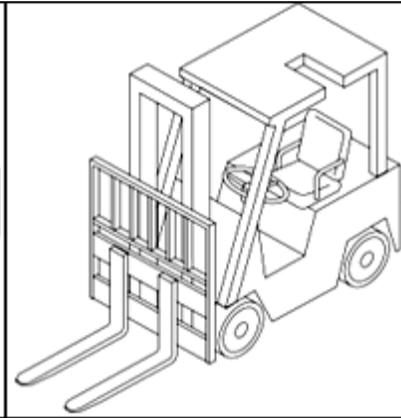
The following are examples of Class I powered industrial trucks.



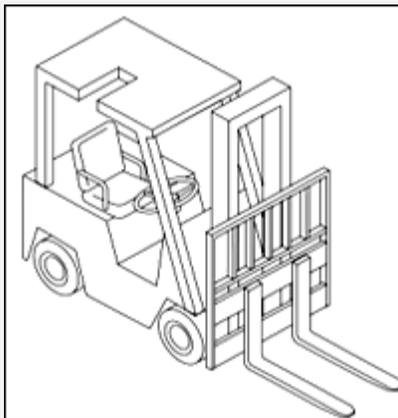
Lift Code 1: Counterbalanced Rider Type, Stand Up.



Lift Code 4: Three Wheel Electric Trucks, Sit Down.



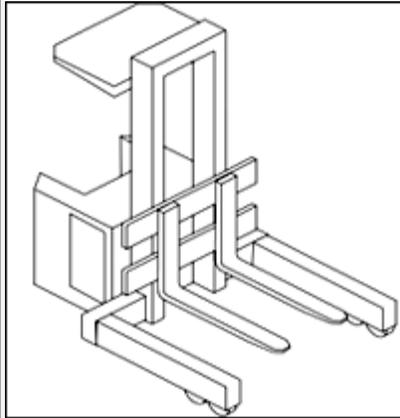
Lift Code 5: Counterbalanced Rider, Cushion Tires, Sit Down.



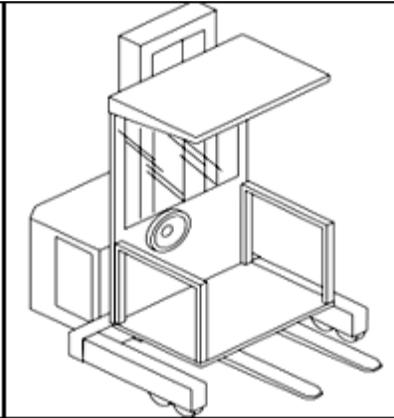
Lift Code 6: Counterbalanced Rider, Pneumatic or Either Type Tire, Sit Down.

Class II: Electric Motor Narrow Aisle Trucks

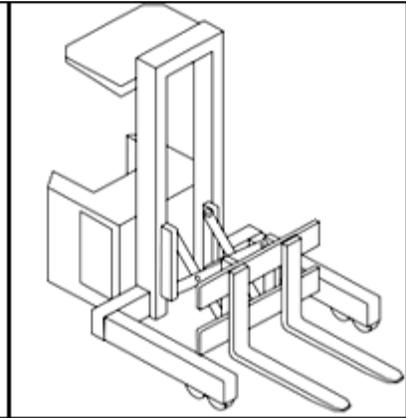
The following are examples of Class II powered industrial trucks.



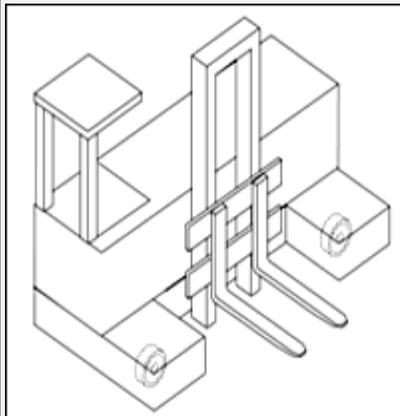
Lift Code 1: High Lift Straddle.



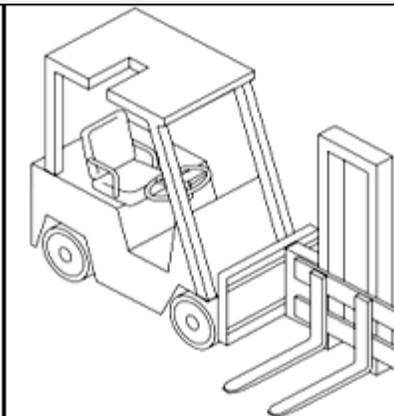
Lift Code 2: Order Picker.



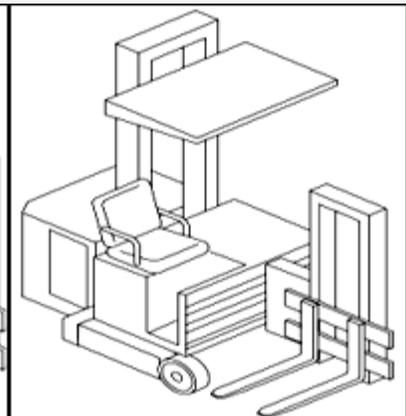
Lift Code 3: Reach Type Outrigger.



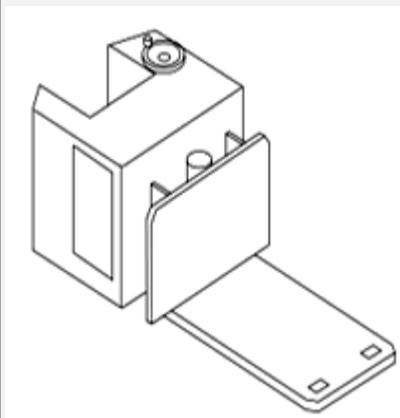
Lift Code 4: Side Loaders: Platforms.



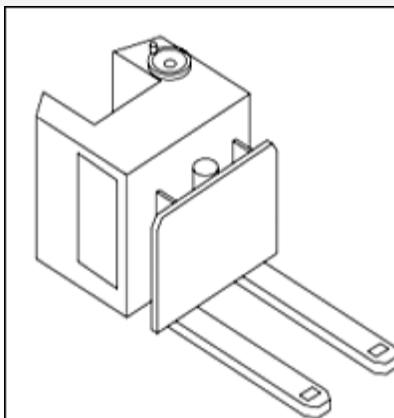
Lift Code 4: Side Loaders: High Lift Pallet.



Lift Code 4: Turret Trucks.



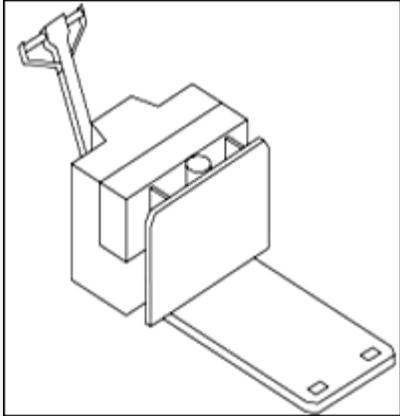
Lift Code 6: Low Lift Platform.



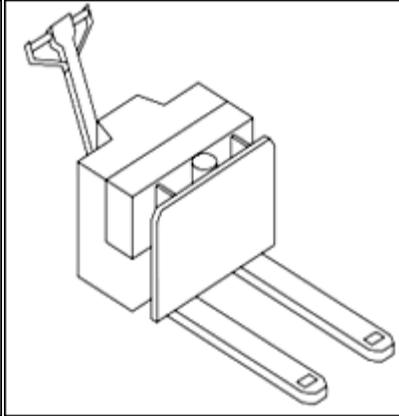
Lift Code 6: Low Lift Pallet.

Class III: Electric Motor Hand Trucks or Hand/Rider Trucks

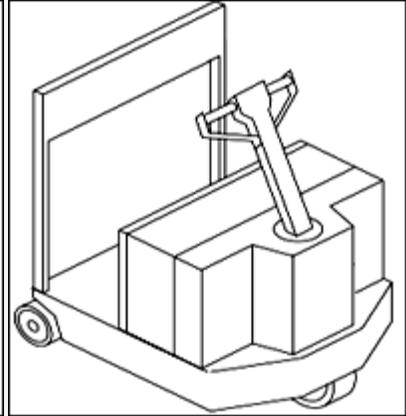
The following are examples of Class III powered industrial trucks.



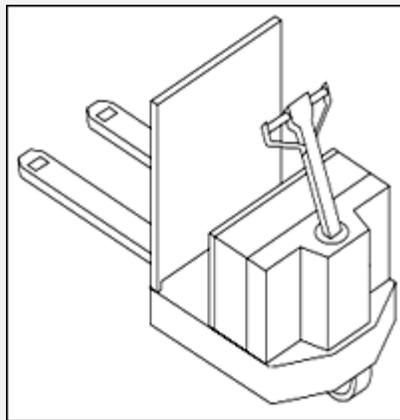
Lift Code 1: Low Lift Platform.



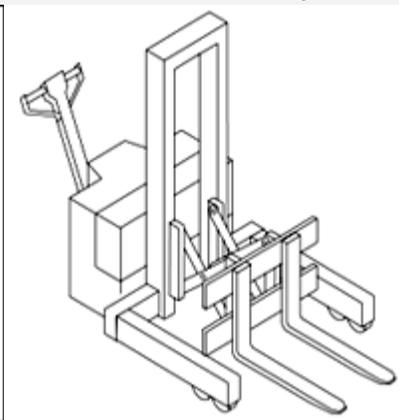
Lift Code 2: Low Lift Walking Pallet.



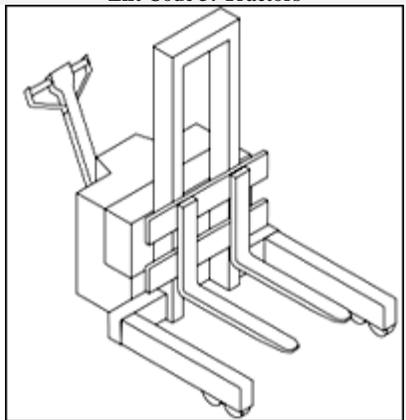
Lift Code 3: Tractors



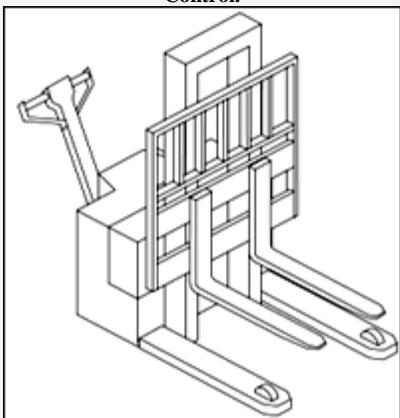
Lift Code 4: Low Lift Walking/Center Control.



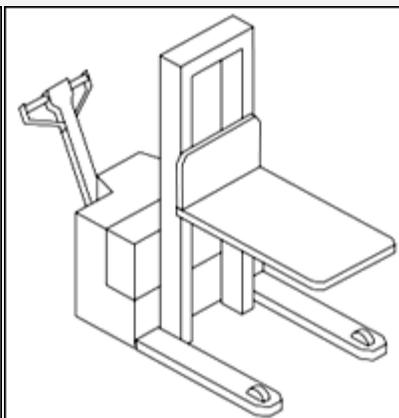
Lift Code 5: Reach Type Outrigger.



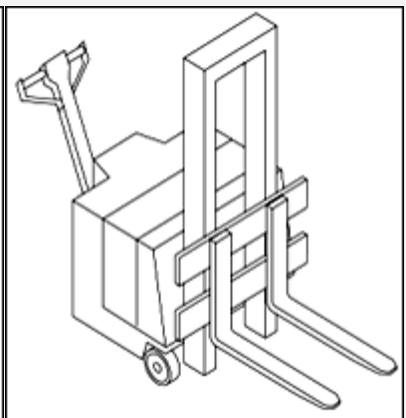
Lift Code 6: High Lift Straddle.



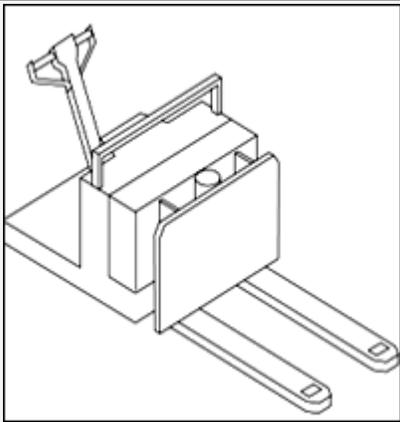
Lift Code 6: Single Face Pallet.



Lift Code 6: High Lift Platform.



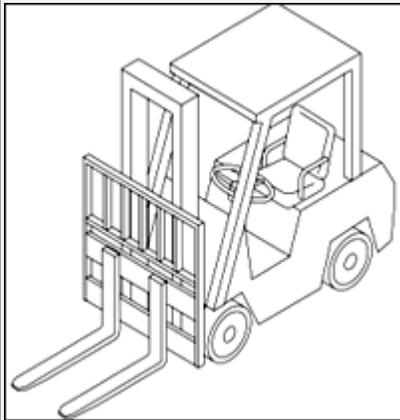
Lift Code 7: High Lift Counterbalanced.



**Lift Code 8: Low Lift Walking/Rider
Pallet and End Control.**

Class IV: Internal Combustion Engine Trucks (Solid/Cushion Tires)

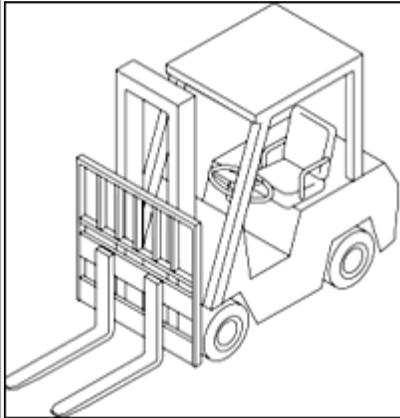
The following are examples of Class IV powered industrial trucks.



**Lift Code 3: Fork, Counterbalanced
(Cushion Tire).**

Class V: Internal Combustion Engine Trucks (Pneumatic Tires)

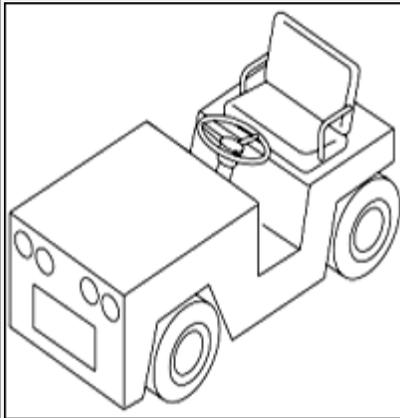
Example of Class V powered industrial trucks.



**Lift Code 4: Fork, Counterbalanced
(Pneumatic Tire).**

Class VI: Electric and Internal Combustion Engine Tractors

Example of Class VI powered industrial trucks.



**Lift Code 1: Sit-Down Rider
(Draw Bar Pull Over 999 lbs.).**

Class VII: Rough Terrain Forklift Trucks

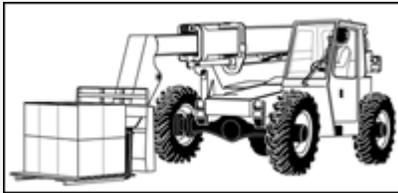
Class VII – Rough terrain forklift is a generic term used to describe forklifts typically intended for use on unimproved natural terrain and disturbed terrain construction sites. However, the term “rough terrain” does not imply that the forklift can be safely operated on every conceivable type of terrain.

There are three basic types of rough terrain forklift:



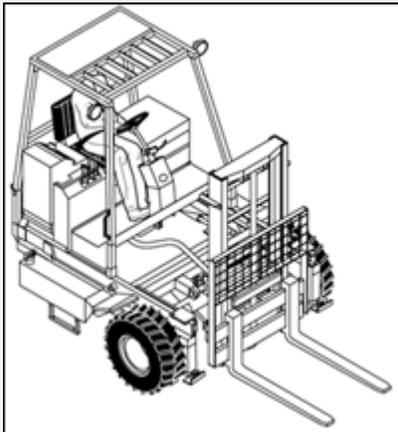
Vertical mast type.

This is an example of a ruggedly constructed forklift and is designed to be used primarily outdoors.



Variable reach type.

This is an example of a vehicle equipped with a telescoping boom, which enables it to pick and place loads at various distances and lift heights in front of the machine. The ability to reach out in front of the forklift allows the operator flexibility in the placement of a load.



Truck/trailer mounted.

This is an example of a portable self-propelled rough terrain forklift that is typically transported to the job site. It is mounted on a carrier to the back of a truck/trailer and is used to unload heavy items from the truck/trailer at the job site. Note that not all truck/trailer mounted forklifts are rough terrain forklifts.

(Drawings courtesy of OSHA website <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/forklift/types/classes.html>.)

Responsibilities

Environmental Health and Safety Department (EH&S)

It is the intent of the Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) to assist departments in understanding what the regulations require and how best to comply with them. EH&S's duties are to:

- Perform an annual review and update of the Forklift Operator Safety Program.
- Arrange for initial operator training as requested by university departments.
- Arrange for refresher operator safety training for all trained operators. Refreshers are required every three (3) years.
- Observe the operation of forklifts when encountered. Report unsafe practices to the appropriate supervisor.

Department Supervisors

- Departments are responsible for arranging and paying for the maintenance and repair services, testing and annual forklift safety inspection for the forklift equipment in the department or shop's inventory.
- Tag lifts that do not pass daily inspection or are otherwise "out of service" and arrange for repairs.
- Maintain records of repairs to forklifts or other powered industrial lifts that are on the department's inventory.
- Ensure only trained and qualified individuals use forklifts or other powered industrial lifts.
- Keep records to document that each employee operator in supervisor's shop or department has successfully completed operator safety training and testing. Record shall include the name of the operator, date of training and name of the trainer and if a different person, the evaluator. Keep a copy of the operator's training certificate.
- Provide operators with specific familiarization on each of the department's forklifts. Record this on the Forklift Operator Evaluation Review Form.
- Verify employee compliance with the principles and practices outlined in the Forklift Operator Safety Program.
- Ensure the operator completes the Daily Pre-Use Checklist before operating the lift.
- Observe the operation of forklifts and correct unsafe behaviors and practices.

Operators

- Read and comply with the Forklift Safety Program. It is maintained on the NIU EH&S website.
- Review the operating instructions and safety guidelines for the forklift to be used.
- Complete the Daily Forklift Checklist before operating any lift.
- Notify supervisor of any deficiencies noted during inspection of lift.
- Do not use a lift that has failed the annual and/or subsequent inspection(s) or already has an "out of service" tag affixed to it.
- Observe the operation of the forklift and report problems, malfunctions or unsafe practices to the supervisor.

Any Employee

- Observe the operation of forklifts when encountered. Report unsafe practices to the appropriate supervisor.

Contractors

Contractors are not to use NIU equipment unless operated by NIU employee operators. Otherwise, contractors are to provide their own equipment. (Refer to the NIU Contractor Safety Program on the NIU EH&S website.)

Operator Training

Before sending a new employee for operator safety training, the department supervisor determines if the potential powered industrial truck operator is capable of performing the duties necessary to be a competent and safe driver. This is based upon his/her physical and mental abilities to perform job functions that are essential to the operation of the vehicle.

These capabilities include the level at which the operator must:

- See and hear within reasonably acceptable limits. This includes the ability to see at a distance and peripherally. In certain instances, it is also necessary for the driver to discern different colors, primarily red, yellow, and green.
- Endure the physical demands of the job.
- Endure the environmental extremes of the job, such as the ability of the person to work in areas of excessive cold or heat. An operator must be able to climb onto and off of a truck, to sit in the vehicle for extended periods of time, and to turn his/her body to look in the direction of travel when driving in reverse.

Once the department supervisor determines that a potential operator is capable of performing powered industrial truck duties, the supervisor is to identify the employee to EH&S. EH&S will arrange for classroom training and evaluation. If necessary the employee will be sent to a training contractor facility. If at all possible he or she will be placed in the group for on-campus training. Thereafter, the department supervisor conducts practical training and evaluation.

Initial Training

During operator safety training the employee will receive both classroom instruction and practical training. Classroom instruction may include lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning, videos, and exams, and covers the following topics:

Forklift-related operations

- Operating instructions, warnings, and precautions for the types of forklift the operator will be authorized to operate.
- Differences between the forklift and the automobile.
- Any vehicle inspection and maintenance that the operator will be required to perform.
- Operating limitations.
- Any other operating instructions, warnings, or precautions listed in the operator's manual for the types of vehicle that the employee is being trained to operate.

Work -related topics

- Surface conditions where the vehicle will be operated.
- Composition of loads to be carried and load stability.
- Ramps and other sloped surfaces that could affect the vehicle's stability.

Practical training may include these formats: demonstrations and classroom instruction by the trainer and hands-on practical exercises by the trainee. All powered industrial truck operators are trained and tested on the equipment they will be driving before they begin their job. Practical training covers the following:

Forklift-related topics

- Forklift controls and instrumentation - Where they are located, what they do, and how they work.
- Engine or motor operation.
- Steering and maneuvering.
- Visibility (including restrictions due to loading and unloading).
- Fork and attachment adaptation, operation, and use limitations.
- Vehicle capacity
- Vehicle stability
- Refueling and/or charging of batteries.
- Operating limitations

Workplace-related topics

- Load manipulation, stacking, and unstacking.
- Narrow aisles and other restricted places where the vehicle will be operated.
- Hazardous (classified) locations where the vehicle will be operated.
- Closed environments and other areas where insufficient ventilation or poor vehicle maintenance could cause a buildup of carbon monoxide or diesel exhaust and potential health effects.
- Other unique or potentially hazardous environmental conditions in the workplace that could affect safe operation.

Each type of powered industrial truck has a different "feel" to it, and that makes operating it slightly different from operating other industrial trucks. The work areas where these trucks are being used also present particular hazards. For these reasons, it is impractical to develop a single "generic" training

program that fits all powered industrial trucks. Accordingly the operational hazards of powered industrial trucks will be covered during training, including:

- General hazards that apply to the operation of all or most powered industrial trucks.
- Hazards associated with the particular make and model of the truck.
- Hazards of the workplace in general.
- Hazards of the particular workplace where the vehicle is operated.

If each potential operator has received training in any of the elements of the training program and is evaluated to be competent, they need not be retrained in those elements before initial assignment in the workplace. The training must be specific for the types of trucks that employees will be authorized to operate and for the type of workplace in which the trucks will be operated.

Training Certification

After an employee has completed the training program, the instructor will determine whether the potential driver can safely perform the job. At this point, the trainee will take a performance test or practical exercise through which the instructor will decide if the training has been adequate. All powered industrial truck trainees are tested on the equipment they will be driving.

EH&S is responsible for keeping records to certify and document that each employee has successfully completed operator training and testing. Each certificate includes the name of the operator, the date(s) of the training, and the name of the person who did the training and evaluation. The Department Supervisor keeps a copy of the certificate and record of the operator's training, including the date it occurred.

Training is primarily done in-house. Operators in need of initial training outside of the 3 year cycle that most NIU forklift operators are on will be sent to training vendors.

Performance Evaluation

Each certified powered industrial truck operator is evaluated at least once every 3 years to verify that the operator has retained and uses the knowledge and skills needed to drive safely. If the operator is observed to be lacking the appropriate skills and knowledge, the department supervisor shall perform an evaluation. If the operator fails that evaluation he or she shall be retrained.

[There is a copy of the Forklift Operator Evaluation Review Form in the Appendix.](#)

Refresher Training

The refresher training cycle is every three years, but may additionally be triggered by any of the following situations:

- If the operator is involved in an accident or a near-miss incident.
- If the operator has been observed driving the vehicle in an unsafe manner.
- When the operator is assigned to a different type of truck.
- If it has been determined during an evaluation that the operator needs additional training.
- When there are changes in the workplace that could affect the safe operation of the truck. This could include a different type of paving, reconfiguration of the storage racks, new construction leading to narrower aisles, or restricted visibility.

Current Certified Powered Industrial Lift Operators

Under no circumstances shall anyone operate a powered industrial truck until he or she has successfully completed a powered industrial truck training program. If this was completed elsewhere but NIU, the operator must produce proof of training in the form of an unexpired forklift operator safety training certificate. Regardless of claimed previous experience, all newly employed lift operators must at least undergo a performance evaluation and refresh every three years.

A list of current authorized powered industrial truck operators is to be maintained by the respective department supervisor.

Inspection and Maintenance of Powered Industrial Lifts

Pre-Operational Inspection Procedures

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and the university require operators to perform pre-operational equipment checks on powered industrial trucks to be used that day prior to the beginning of each shift. This inspection is to ensure the safe operating condition of the vehicle.

[See Appendix for a copy of the Daily Forklift Checklist form.](#) A supply of these or similar forms should be provided in each charging and parking area within user departments. Daily checklist forms must be retained for 6 months.

Periodic Inspection Procedures

Periodic inspections are done in conjunction with the particular powered industrial truck's maintenance or service schedule. Maintenance schedules are normally expressed in days and operating or running hours. Most manufacturers' operator instruction manuals contain the recommended maintenance schedule. Inspections and maintenance or repair beyond the recommended service schedules are to be performed by authorized, certified service technicians.

Maintenance

Investing time and effort into the proper upkeep of equipment results in day-to-day reliability. Keeping up with the manufacturers' recommended maintenance and lubrication schedules, ensuring batteries have sufficient electrolyte and completing the proper records will also increase the forklift's longevity and enhance resale value.

Department supervisors are to complete a receiving or delivery inspection whenever the university purchases powered industrial trucks and shall perform the recommended "breaking in" inspections and maintenance. Departmental supervisors are required to follow the manufacturer's operator instruction manual for daily or weekly maintenance.

Periodic maintenance (those completed monthly, every 6 months, or annually) is to be performed by a factory-certified expert or a dealer. The department that uses the forklift is to retain all maintenance records.

Safe Operating Procedures

Use of powered industrial trucks can create certain hazards that only safe operation can prevent. To encourage this the following general operating procedures are established.

Driving

Driving a powered industrial truck is fundamentally different than driving a car or other trucks. In fact, powered industrial trucks:

- Are usually steered by the rear wheels.
- Steer more easily loaded than empty.
- Are driven in reverse as often as forward.
- Are often steered with one hand.
- Have a center of gravity toward the rear, shifting to the front as forks are raised.

Unlike cars, some powered industrial trucks have a greater chance of tipping over when suddenly turned. They have a very short rear wheel swing. Speed can cause the center of gravity to shift dramatically, so at high speeds sudden turns can tip them. That could result in serious injury and damage. Similarly, speeding over rough surfaces can increase the chance of tipping.

Although structurally different than cars, powered industrial trucks, like cars, can collide with property and people. Therefore, this policy in compliance with OSHA regulations, requires all operators to follow these driving procedures:

- Observe all traffic regulations that have been set up by the facility.
- ALWAYS look in the direction of travel.
- Avoid trying to talk with those around while driving the vehicle.
- Keep to the right whenever possible.
- ALWAYS drive with the load only as high as necessary to avoid ground obstructions.
- Use the horn only as a warning signal. DO NOT sound the horn to attract the attention of other employees.
- DO NOT extend arms or legs beyond the cab or sides of the vehicle.
- ALWAYS keep your head, hands and feet out of the LIFT UPRIGHTS.
- DO NOT drive with wet or greasy hands or feet. Otherwise you will not have complete control of your vehicle.
- Avoid running over any loose objects.
- ALWAYS keep an eye out for overhead obstructions.
- Avoid sudden starts and stops.

- NEVER use the reverse as a brake and never reverse direction while in motion (unless specified by written manufactures' instruction).
- ALWAYS come to a complete stop before shifting gears.
- NEVER use a forklift or other powered industrial truck to tow objects such as rail cars. The forklift will not be able to brake their movement and they will end up pushing you and possibly crushing your vehicle.
- ALWAYS be alert.
- NO RIDERS!

Load Lifting and Carrying

Powered industrial trucks can only lift up to its load capacity. Each truck has its own load capacity, which is indicated on the rating plate. Powered industrial trucks also have a three-point suspension that forms an imaginary triangle from the left front wheel to the right front wheel to the point between the two back wheels. The center of gravity for a powered industrial truck must lie somewhere within this triangle otherwise the truck will tip over. The load and its position on the forks as well as traveling speed and slopes all affect the center of gravity. Loads need special care so that they do not fall. In order to prevent tipping and load-falling hazards, the following load-lifting and carrying procedures have been established:

Lifting:

1. Determine the nature of the load. (Make sure it will not exceed the capacity limitations of your vehicle.).
2. Adjust the forks appropriately. (Spread the forks as far as possible while still allowing both to fit comfortably under the load.).
3. Approach the load slowly, straight on, and with the forks parallel to the floor.
4. Place the forks under the load as far as possible.
5. Slowly lift the load a few inches and tilt the mast back slightly.
6. If lifting the load from a stack, slowly back away to clear the stack and then slowly lower the load to the lowest position where it will still clear ground obstructions.

Carrying:

- Remember that the way the load is handled affects its stability.
- ALWAYS drive in such a manner as to give the maximum possible stability to the load. Avoid fast starts and stops and quick, sharp turns.
- If the forklift has multiple gears, always start out in low gear when carrying a load. Starting in high gear can damage the vehicle.
- Only raise the forks high enough to clear obstructions. NEVER DRIVE WITH THE LOAD RAISED

EXCESSIVELY. THIS IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS AND CAN CAUSE SERIOUS INJURIES AND DAMAGE.

- Avoid running over any obstruction, no matter what the size. Running over even a small obstruction can cause the load to spill or tip the forklift. Avoid driving over railroad tracks when carrying a load. If you must, drive slowly, approach the tracks at a forty-five degree angle, and grasp the steering wheel firmly.
- ALWAYS look in the direction you are traveling and be aware of any possible vision obstructions. If the load obstructs forward view, federal regulations require the operator to travel with the load trailing. NEVER drive while experiencing personal vision obstruction. If this occurs, stop the vehicle immediately and correct the problem.
- Watch closely for overhead obstructions. Keep an eye out for sprinkler systems, door frames, fire lines and lighting fixtures. Hitting one of these can cause damage to the facility as well as damage to the load or vehicle.
- Exercise extreme caution when driving over "non-standard" surfaces. These include elevated surfaces, inclines, dock-boards, and bridge-plates, railroad grade crossings, and truck, semi-trailer, or railcar floors. Make sure to follow the safety procedures for these surfaces as outlined in the training.

Fuel Handling and Storage

Some of the powered industrial trucks operate with highly flammable and combustible fuels.

The storage and handling of liquid fuels, including gasoline and diesel fuel are to be in accordance with NFPA Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code (NFPA 30-1969).

All employees who handle or use flammable liquids and gases are educated in their safe handling and use and made aware of the specific OSHA requirements for the specific use of the fuel during forklift operator safety training. Employees are instructed to follow all state, federal regulations, and university policies concerning the handling, storage and use of fuel.

Battery Charging and Changing

Batteries present a hazard because they contain corrosive chemical solutions. During recharging a worker may be exposed not only to the acid solution but also to hydrogen gas that is produced during the recharging process. In high enough concentration hydrogen is explosive. Inspection and filling of batteries is covered in operator safety training.

Only personnel who have been specifically trained in the appropriate procedures, who understand the dangers involved and know the appropriate precautions to take may be allowed to change batteries. Members of NIU's Electrician Shop may be called upon to change smaller (auto type) batteries. It may be necessary to have a certified forklift repair technician change the industrial size batteries used in battery powered forklifts. In such cases the department supervisor shall coordinate with the forklift repair firm to provide the technician with a safe temporary work area away from main aisle ways and the lifting equipment necessary to remove and replace the heavy industrial battery.

A proper general forklift maintenance area should have the following:

- It should be in an area away from main aisle ways.
- Area is kept clean and free of any combustible materials.
- Has an emergency eyewash station for workers, preferably plumbed rather than bottles.
- Appropriate PPE is at hand.
- Appropriate corrosives spill clean-up material is at hand.
- Moderate temperatures and good ventilation is maintained in a range suitable for battery maintenance.
- Good housekeeping is essential.

The battery charging area may be separate from the forklift maintenance area provided the charger apparatus is:

- Away from main aisle ways.
- Kept in a protected area to prevent damage to it from vehicles.
- Appropriate PPE is at hand.
- Appropriate corrosives spill clean-up material is at hand.

It may be necessary to request that forklift maintenance/battery charging areas and equipment be provided for such forklift-maintaining departments that are currently without them.

Battery charging generates hydrogen gas that may present an explosion hazard. Smoking therefore is absolutely prohibited near forklifts. This prohibition also applies to open flames, sparks, or electric arcs. An effective means of fire protection must be provided in the area.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for battery charging, maintenance or changing include:

- Face shield
- Safety glasses
- Protective gloves suitable for chemical handling
- Protective apron suitable for chemical handling

Wear long sleeves and closed shoes (no exposed skin) whenever inspecting, cleaning or otherwise working on forklift batteries.

Operators Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Day-to-day hazards that may threaten operators include falling objects and chemical spills. For this reason it is suggested that the powered industrial truck operators wear the following PPE:

- Hard hats
- Protective work gloves
- Safety shoes.

Additional PPE may be necessary depending on the circumstances, conditions, and material being handled. Each department must implement a policy on which PPE will be required and when it will be required.

Pedestrians

It is not unusual for powered industrial trucks to be found in the same work areas as pedestrians. Pedestrians and powered industrial truck operators must be aware of each other's presence and must watch out for one another.

All powered industrial truck operators must:

- ALWAYS watch for pedestrians and be prepared to give them the right of way.
- DRIVE DEFENSIVELY! Maintain a safe distance from pedestrians and all people that are near the path of travel.
- NEVER drive the vehicle up to anyone standing in front of a bench or other fixed object.
- NEVER allow anyone to pass beneath the elevated portion of any forklift, either loaded or unloaded.
- DO NOT allow bystanders when stacking loads or when dealing with elevated loads.
- NEVER allow anyone to hitch a ride on the vehicle or to ride the forks.

All pedestrians are to remain in designated pedestrian walkways as much as possible and be alert to forklift operation in the area.

Appendix

The following documents are a part of this document:

- Forklift Operator Evaluation Review Form
- Daily Forklift Checklist

The forms themselves are found on the NIU EH&S website <http://www.niu.edu/ehs/forms/index.shtml>. Just click on [Forms](#).