



## Forklift Safety

Training requirements and helpful tips

A forklift is a powerful tool that allows one person to precisely lift and place large, heavy loads with little effort. However, there is a great risk of injury or death when a forklift operator has not been trained.

### Must employees be trained?

**Yes.** All employees operating a forklift must be trained. The training consists of three elements: formal (general, classroom-type) training, practical (site-specific, hands-on) training and a visual evaluation of the operator's skill.

### Does an employer have to hire a professional trainer to give the training?

**No.** Anyone who has the knowledge, training and experience to train and evaluate forklift operators can conduct the training.

### Can an employer develop their own training program?

**Yes.** An employer can develop their own program using, for example, WISHA Codes, Forklift Safety Guide, videos, an owner's manual review, or a hands-on training session. Additionally, the trainer would observe the operator and evaluate their ability to safely operate the forklift. Topics that must be covered during training and evaluation are listed on the back of this fact sheet.

### Does the employee have to be evaluated after being trained?

**Yes.** After completing the classroom and hands-on training, the employee must demonstrate the skills learned. An evaluator designated by the employer must visually evaluate these skills. Additionally, all employees must be evaluated every three years to ensure that they are still operating the forklifts in a safe manner.

### Does training have to be documented?

**Yes.** The employer must keep a record of forklift training and the evaluation. The record includes the name of the operator, date of the training, date of evaluation and the name of the person(s) giving the training and evaluation.

### Does training from a previous employer count?

**Yes and no.** Training received from a previous employer can meet the general, classroom-type training requirement, if such training was appropriate to the truck and working conditions encountered and if the operator was evaluated and found competent to operate the truck safely within three years. However, the current employer is still responsible for site-specific hands-on training for the specific forklift that the employee will be using. Additionally, the current employer is required to observe and evaluate the employee's ability to safely operate the forklift. Both the training and the evaluation have to be documented. (Sample on back of this form.)

### Is a license or certification required to operate a forklift?

**No.** There is no license requirement for forklift operators but the employer must document that the operator has completed the following training:

- General forklift operation and safety information (topics listed on the back of this form)
- Workplace-specific training, including practice on the type of forklift the operator will actually be using (topics listed on the back of this form)
- An evaluation of the operator's skill and ability to operate the forklift safely. Remember to document the training!

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### Contact Consultation Services:

Everett .....	425-290-1431
Tukwila .....	206-835-1146
Tacoma .....	253-596-3917
Tumwater .....	360-902-5472
E. Wenatchee .....	509-886-6570
Spokane.....	509-324-2543

📄 On the Web: [www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ)



## These topics must be covered when training or evaluating a forklift operator.

**Employers must document that employees have been trained and/or evaluated in all the topics listed below. Use of this checklist for that purpose is optional.**

GENERAL FORKLIFT TOPICS	WORKPLACE-SPECIFIC TOPICS
Operating instructions, warnings and precautions for types of industrial truck the operator will be authorized to operate.	Surface conditions where the vehicle will be operated.
Differences between the forklift and an automobile.	Composition of loads to be carried and load stability.
Vehicle controls and instrumentation: where they are located, what they do and how they work.	Load manipulation, stacking and unshackling.
Engine or motor operation.	Pedestrian traffic where the vehicle will be operated.
Steering and maneuvering.	Narrow aisles and other restricted places where the vehicle will be operated.
Visibility (including restrictions due to loading).	Hazardous (classified) locations where the vehicle will be operated.
Fork and attachment adaptation, operation and use limitations.	Ramps and other sloped surfaces that could affect the vehicle's stability.
Vehicle capacity.	Closed environments and other areas where insufficient ventilation or poor vehicle maintenance could cause a buildup of carbon monoxide or diesel exhaust.
Vehicle stability.	Other unique or potentially hazardous environmental conditions in the workplace that could affect safe operation.
Vehicle inspection and maintenance that the operator will be required to perform.	Retraining required if changes in workplace conditions could affect safe operation (such as: new trenches, new worker access routes or new staging areas on construction sites).
Refueling and/or charging and recharging of batteries.	
Operating limitations.	
Other operating instructions, warnings or precautions listed in the operator's manual for the types of vehicles that the employee is being trained on.	

**Name of Operator:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Formal Training: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Practical Training: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

A training program covering general forklift information is available on the L&I website at [www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainTools/Online/Courses](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/TrainTools/Online/Courses).

For more information, visit [www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ) and click on "F" for Forklifts.

### We can help

**Employers:** We offer workplace safety and health consultations, risk management assessments, training and technical assistance at no cost. For more information, go to [www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov](http://www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov).

**Employee/employee representatives:** You may file a formal complaint when you believe a safety or health hazard exists in your workplace. Go to [www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Complaint](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Complaint) for information in English and Spanish.

This information is available in alternate formats on request.

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