



TRAINING IS KEY TO POWERED PALLET TRUCK SAFETY

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Introduction

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It should go without saying, but a powered pallet truck is a type of fork lift truck. So it follows that the risks surrounding its operation is the same.

Yet, these trucks are often regarded as less of a risk simply because they appear less daunting in stature, without cabs and, in most cases, without loads being lifted at height. Though powered pallet trucks can look fairly innocuous, they should not be underestimated. After all, there's a reason why they are covered by the same legal requirement as counterbalance and reach trucks for safety training.

Powered pallet trucks are heavy pieces of equipment and easily capable of causing real damage to operators and colleagues on foot, as well as stock, fixtures and fittings. According to the HSE, over 200 people per year are struck by fork lift trucks and other vehicles in food and drink factories.

That's not all; they are often operated in constricted spaces and with the operator only ever an arm's reach away from the front of the machine when it's in motion (in the case of pedestrian operated trucks), the risk of trapping is high. And rider operated trucks present their own hazards; a hasty dismount before the machine comes to a complete stop can easily lead to a broken ankle.

These and all incidents involving workplace transport equipment are not only costly and disruptive to the lives of those injured but also to the businesses in which they take place, so it's crucial that employers, as well as the workforce, understand the risks and their responsibilities to minimise them.

Regulation 9 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) requires that those operating any type of work equipment should be trained in its use, as should those who oversee the operation of the equipment. Managers and supervisors play a key role in keeping their teams safe so it's vital that they can identify the risks.

To help businesses who use powered pallet trucks to stay safe, we have put together five top tips for the safe use of powered pallet trucks to share amongst your workforce:

1. Control your speed

Always drive at a safe speed, matching the pace of the operation to the conditions and load being handled. Even when carrying a load correctly, excessive speed can cause a truck to tip over, and an unladen truck will tip over even more readily. Avoid harsh acceleration, braking and erratic use of hydraulics. Instead, plan ahead, change pace gradually and sympathetically and operate hydraulics smoothly to reduce the risk of a tip over, loss of load or worse.



2. Stick to safe, appropriate use of your truck

Only ever use a truck in the way it is meant to be used. Inappropriate and unsafe use is a disciplinary matter that could lead to loss of employment. Most accidents on these machines involve the truck coming into contact with the operator. To stay safe:

- Face the direction of travel
- Stand to one side of the tiller arm
- Keep arm fully outstretched to maximise the distance between operator and truck
- To stay in control, keep at least one hand on the tiller wheel at all times when moving
- Always travel forks trailing; they should only lead when picking up/putting down a load
- Never ride on a truck without a platform. If it has a platform, ride only on this part of the truck

3. Ensure stability is maintained

To help maintain stability, stick to carrying out one action at a time. When starting to move or stopping, turning, lifting or lowering, ensure each action is completed smoothly and carefully. And remember, these trucks are most stable when the load is carried as low and as far back as possible.

4. Stay aware of pedestrians

According to HSE figures, on average, around 60% of those injured by forklift trucks are 'on foot' at the time of impact. Be aware of pedestrians at all times. Always obey signs and markings and keep to designated travel routes and slow down and sound the horn when approaching blind corners. Never allow passengers on to your truck, including standing or riding on the forks.

5. Maintain concentration and observations throughout

Prevent accidents by staying aware. Always look in the direction of travel and make sure you can see clearly ahead to avoid debris or potholes. Never do anything which could affect your concentration or physical ability to control the truck, including eating, drinking, using a phone or smoking.

For more information or to find out about the range of lift truck courses available through Mentor, visit www.mentortraining.co.uk or call 01246 555222 to discuss your requirements.





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