



# Tailgate Safety Training for Landscaping and Horticultural Services

Agricultural Safety Program, 590 Woody Hayes Drive, Columbus, OH 43210

## Forklift Safety

**Objective: Operate forklifts safely.**

### *How to Use This Module*

When forklifts are used improperly, serious accidents can occur. For this module:

- Read the information below on forklift safety procedures.
- Ask for forklift safety training from an experienced operator.
- Find areas of your workplace where a forklift would be used.
- Identify possible hazards and accidents.
- Discuss any questions with your supervisor.
- Review the important points.
- Take the True/False quiz to check your learning.



### Background

A forklift or powered industrial truck can be dangerous if operated by untrained workers. The driver or bystanders can be seriously injured or killed if an accident should occur. Forklifts can also cause damage to the employer's property. Good safety procedures for operating a forklift should be followed at all times.

### Safety: Before Operating

- Do not operate a forklift if you have not been properly trained in all operations and safety procedures.
- Never operate a forklift without permission from a supervisor.
- Check brakes, steering, controls, forks, hoist, fire extinguisher, warning devices, and lights at the beginning and end of each shift. Do not operate a forklift if any item on the checklist fails inspection. Report all problems to your supervisor.

- Pay attention to maximum load limits. Never overload.
- All forklifts should be equipped with a multi-purpose dry chemical fire extinguisher.

## Safety: During Transport

- No riders on forklifts!
- Make sure the load is balanced before and during transport.
- Check the ground or floor for uneven areas and debris.
- Always travel at a safe speed.
- Tilt the forklift masts back when driving the forklift. This will lessen the chance of the load becoming unbalanced.
- Never reach through the mast for any reason. If a load has shifted, stop the forklift, lower the forks, put the forklift into park, and set the brake. If necessary, have another worker help you reposition the load.
- Keep the forks about 4 to 6 inches above the ground when moving a load.
- If you cannot see because of the size of the load, drive in reverse slowly. If necessary, have another worker guide you and serve as a lookout.
- Use standard hand signals for communication. For details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Hand Signals for Vehicle Safety*.
- Do not speed. The forklift should be driven at about 5 miles per hour. This speed is the same as a normal walk.
- Watch out for other forklifts and workers.
- Always back the forklift down a ramp. Keep the load in front when going uphill.
- Always keep your head, arms, and legs inside the driving compartment.
- Operators should always wear hard hats in high lift areas.
- Never lift people.
- Never lift a load above workers. Never allow workers to stand under a raised load.
- Sound the horn when approaching a corner.
- Remember that when you turn a corner, the rear of the forklift makes a wide swing. Watch for clearance on both sides of the aisle.
- Check side and overhead clearances when loading and unloading.
- Watch for water, oil, or other liquids on the floor. Report any wet surface to your supervisor.
- Watch out for overhead hazards such as pipes, beams, lights, sprinklers, door casings, cable wires, and signs.
- Always be careful around loading docks. Do not operate the forklift too close to the edge of the dock. Many forklift accidents occur when a forklift backs off a dock. For more details, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Loading Docks and Warehouses*.
- Do not turn the wheels too fast. This can cause the forklift to overturn.

## Safety: Stacking Materials

- Always stack materials so they are tied in. For example, if you have six loads to stack, put three on the floor, two on the second tier, and one on the top. This forms a pyramid and lessens the possibility of materials falling.
- Do not stack materials too high. This can cause materials to fall.
- Make sure that stacked materials do not block the building's sprinkler system.

## Review These Important Points

- All employees need to be properly trained before operating a forklift.
- Do a forklift safety check before and after each shift.
- Do not overload the forklift.
- Check all clearances while operating a forklift.

- Watch out for other forklifts and workers while operating a forklift.
- Never allow anyone to ride on the forklift.
- Use caution when turning corners.
- Never speed while operating a forklift.
- Always be alert around loading docks.

## **About These Modules**

The author team for the training modules in the landscape and horticultural tailgate training series includes Dee Jepsen, Program Director, Agricultural Safety and Health, Ohio State University Extension; Michael Wonacott, Research Specialist, Vocational Education; Peter Ling, Greenhouse Specialist; and Thomas Bean, Agricultural Safety Specialist. Modules were developed with funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number 46E3-HT09.

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Answer Key: 1 = T, 2 = T, 3 = T, 4 = F, 5 = F.

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## Forklift Safety

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### True or False?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. You should be trained before operating a forklift.                    | T | F |
| 2. Always back a forklift down a ramp.                                   | T | F |
| 3. Always keep your head, arms, and legs inside the driving compartment. | T | F |
| 4. Keep the forks about one foot off the ground.                         | T | F |
| 5. It is okay to lift someone if the situation is work-related.          | T | F |