Safe Use of Hand Pallet Trucks and Electric Carts for Trainers and Supervisors

Objective: Use hand pallet trucks and electric carts safely in the workplace.

**Trainer’s Note**

Hand pallet trucks and electric carts make moving materials easy. But they need to be used safely to avoid injuries. For this module:

- Review the information below on how to use hand pallet trucks safely.
- Lead a discussion to help workers apply the information to your workplace.
- Briefly review the operating instructions for hand pallet trucks with the group. Ask an experienced worker to demonstrate working with a hand pallet truck.
- Discuss hand pallet truck accidents and prevention strategies. Use incidents and past accidents to stress the importance of safe operation.
- Review the important points.
- Have workers take the True/False quiz to check their learning.

**Background**

Moving materials with a hand pallet truck or electric cart may seem easy, but safe handling requires skill.

- Raise the forks by pushing the actuating lever down and pumping the handle. This is the only time the handle should be down — to jack the pallet. A 1-inch clearance between the floor and the pallet is usually sufficient.
- Put the actuating lever in a neutral or middle position to move the load. This position disengages the lifting mechanism and frees the handle from hydraulic resistance, but keeps the forks raised. When the lever is released, it will automatically return to the neutral position.

**For Safe Operation**

- Pay attention to maximum load limits. Never overload.
- Check brakes, steering, controls, forks, hoists, and warning devices. Report any problems to your supervisor.
• Watch for water, oil, or other liquids on the floor. Report any wet surface to your supervisor.
• If possible, avoid moving loads up or down ramps.
• Keep the load uphill when going up or down any incline.
• Keep the forks about 4 to 6 inches above the ground.
• Do not turn the handle too fast. This can cause the load to shift.
• Watch for clearances on both sides of the aisle.
• Do not carry riders on the hand pallet truck.
• Center the forks evenly under the load to maintain good balance.
• Ensure the stability of the load.
• Use both forks for lifting a load.
• Pull rather than push loads for increased maneuverability.
• Maneuvering loads using the neutral position reduces operator fatigue.
• Operate at controllable speeds. Hand pallet trucks do not have brakes.
• Allow plenty of room to stop.
• Be aware of other people and forklifts in or near your work area.
• Always be alert on loading docks. Stay away from the edge of the dock.
• If you are loading or unloading a truck at a dock, enter or exit the truck squarely.
• Park the pallet truck out of traffic areas in a safe, level place with the forks lowered.
• The handle should be left in the up position to eliminate tripping hazards.

**Review These Important Points**

• Maneuvering loads in the neutral position reduces operator fatigue.
• Keep pallet trucks or electric carts out of traffic areas when forks are lowered.
• Never use one fork to lift a load.
• No riders on the pallet truck or electric cart.

**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
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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Name____________________________________

True or False?

1. Push the load. 	 
2. Carry as much as the hand pallet truck will hold. 
3. Pallet trucks do not have brakes. 
4. A clearance of one inch between the floor and the pallet is usually sufficient. 
5. Operate the hand pallet truck at a safe speed to avoid accidents.