



Weekly Safety Briefings

Week 27: June 30th – July 4th, 2025
Powered Industrial Truck Safety

Introduction

Powered Industrial Trucks (PIT) including forklifts and other powered material handling vehicles are extremely common in the workplace. So common that often they get taken for granted. However, when not handled properly, these powerful machines can cause major damage to workers and the workplace. This week, we will cover the basics of powered industrial truck safety.

Monday – Before Starting

For any job, the pre-job preparations are the most important steps to ensure safety in the workplace. Most commonly, the first step is proper training. Unlike some job functions, powered industrial trucks have specific training requirements from OSHA.

Training requirements:

- There must be formal classroom training and hands on training which includes:
 - Pre-start up inspection
 - Vehicle operation
 - Proper loading and movement
 - Safety precautions
 - Emergency procedures
- Also note, just because an employee has been trained on one type of powered industrial vehicle, does not mean they can operate all types. At minimum there should be an orientation on the new type of vehicle.

Tuesday – Protect the Operator

It's typically habit to put on your seat belt when preparing to drive your car but is it also habit to put on your seat belt when driving your PIT? Between the increased risk of tipping over and the weight of the equipment, it's just as important if not more important. Some PITs, like stand-up forklifts, may not have a seat belt for safety reasons. It's also vitally important in these cases to understand how to properly bail out if the vehicle does tip. Hence the important of specific training for each type of PIT.

Wednesday – Be Aware of Surroundings

While safety is everyone's responsibility in the workplace, PIT operators have the added responsibility to watch for and alert nearby workers because being struck by a PIT could be deadly. Pedestrians should have the right of way in the workplace but also be extra vigilant when transiting in areas with high PIT traffic. PIT operators also need to be aware of their surroundings and the capability of their equipment including always knowing what's ahead, behind, underneath and overhead to avoid serious personnel or property damage.

Thursday – Handling Loads Correctly

Material handling is the main function of any PIT. Handling the material properly is the responsibility of the operator. There are many caveats to proper load handling, but in general a load is within the PITs "stability triangle", which should be covered in depth during training, the chances of tipping a PIT is minimal. If a load is off centered, too heavy, too high or being transported on an incline, the chances of tipping and serious injury or at minimum material damage, is greatly increased. Properly loading handling will help ensure a smooth and safe workday.



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Friday – Open Discussion

This week we've discussed ways to help protect the operator, pedestrians and material when utilizing powered industrial trucks. Now let's take a few minutes for open discussion to talk about your experiences with PITs in the workplace.

- Have you ever operated a PIT? Did you feel you were properly trained? What could have been better?
- Do PITs operate safely in your workplace? If not, how could it be improved?