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How-to: Develop A PIT Operator Training Program



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How to Develop A Powerful Industrial Truck Operator Training Program

This content is intended to be used for training purposes only. It is not a substitute for any provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, or for any standards issued by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).



Before you begin developing your operator training program you should become familiar with the OSHA standard for powered industrial trucks and any operator’s manual pertinent to the equipment you have in your workplace.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR OPERATORS

First, you need to determine the employees that will be required to operate powered industrial trucks in your workplace. If an employee has other duties, but sometimes operates a powered industrial truck, training must be provided.

2. IDENTIFY THE TYPES OF POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS YOU HAVE IN YOUR WORKPLACE AND THOSE EMPLOYEES WHO WILL BE REQUIRED TO OPERATE THE VEHICLES.



There are many different types of powered industrial trucks. Typically, these types of vehicles are known as forklifts or lift trucks. Some types of trucks are not capable of being ridden by the operator. These are also covered by the OSHA standard and training is required. Some trucks are fitted with attachments purchased from the manufacturer. The use of these attachments may affect the manner in which the truck is handled;

therefore training on the use of the attachment would also be required. If your employees will be expected to operate several different types of powered industrial trucks, then training is required on the unique handling characteristics of the vehicles.

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3. METHODS OF TRAINING

Once you have identified your truck operators and types of trucks you have in your workplace, you should determine the methods of training you will use.

Training must consist of a combination of formal instruction and practical training. Using both methods is the only way to ensure that the trainee receives and comprehends the instruction and uses the information to safely operate a powered industrial truck. Note that the formal training need not take place in a classroom.



Discussions can consist of the trainer talking to the trainee and explaining the training material, either in the workplace or in another location. The training must, however, include an explanatory element as well as a practical element.

4. WHAT DOES THE OSHA STANDARD REQUIRE?

Forklift Training shall consist of a combination of:

1. Formal instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, interactive computer learning, video tape, written material)
2. Practical training (demonstrations performed by the trainer and practical exercises performed by the trainee)
3. Evaluation of the operator's performance in the workplace. [29 CFR 1910.178(l)(2)(ii)]

The standard requires employers to develop and implement a forklift training program based on the general principles of:

- Safe truck operation
- Types of vehicle(s) being used in the workplace,
- Hazards of the workplace created by the use of the vehicle(s),
- General safety requirements of the OSHA standard.

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Using visual aids has several advantages, including:

- The employees being trained remain more attentive, thereby increasing the training's effectiveness
- The trainer can use visual presentations to ensure that the necessary information is covered during the training
- Graphical presentations make better use of the training time by decreasing the need for the instructor to carry on long discussions about the instructional material
- Trainees have greater retention of information learned from graphical presentations

While some employees can learn instructional material while seated in a classroom, other employees may learn best by observing an operation (demonstration) and/or by personally performing an operation (practical exercise).

In most cases, a combination of different training methods provides the best training in the least amount of time.

Once you have selected the method of training, then the content of the training program must be considered to include all pertinent training items.

5. TRAINING PROGRAM CONTENT

The following is an outline of a generic powered industrial truck operator training program:

Characteristics of the powered industrial truck(s) the employee will be allowed to operate:

- Differences from the automobile
- Controls and instrumentation: location, what they do, and how they work
- Engine or motor operation
- Steering and maneuvering
- Visibility
- Fork and/or attachment adaption, operation, and limitations of their use
- Vehicle capacity
- Vehicle stability
- Vehicle inspection and maintenance the operator will be required to perform
- Refueling or charging and recharging batteries
- Operating limitations
- Any other operating instruction, warning, or precaution listed in the operator's manual for the type of vehicle the employee is being trained to operate

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The operating environment:

- Floor surfaces and/or ground conditions where the vehicle will be operated
- Composition of probable loads and load stability
- Load manipulation, stacking, unstacking
- Pedestrian traffic
- Narrow aisle and restricted place operation
- Operating in classified hazardous locations
- Operating the truck on ramps and other sloped surfaces that would affect the stability of the vehicle
- Other unique or potentially hazardous environmental conditions that exist or may exist in the workplace

Operating the vehicle in closed environments and other areas where insufficient ventilation and/or poor vehicle maintenance could cause a buildup of carbon monoxide or diesel exhaust

After the training program has been completed, the employer must evaluate the trainee's knowledge and skills and determine that the employee is competent to operate the truck safely.

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