

OSHA's Powered Industrial Truck Standard

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When most of us think of powered industrial trucks and OSHA, we think of forklifts. The forklift association is so strong in fact that OSHA's Powered Industrial Truck Standard (29 CFR 1910.178) is often called OSHA's 'forklift standard.' If your agency owns and operates powered pallet jacks and weight carts however, you should be aware that these are also subject to the same training requirements as forklifts and other industrial trucks covered by the standard. Training must cover all of the topics mentioned below.

Types of Powered Trucks

The standard lists 7 types of common industrial truck based on design, power source, wheel-type, and function:

- Class I - electric motor rider trucks
- Class II – electric motor narrow aisle trucks
- Class III – electric motor hand trucks or hand/rider trucks [includes pallet jacks & many weight carts]
- Class IV – internal combustion engine trucks (solid/cushion tires)
- Class V – internal combustion engine trucks (pneumatic tires)
- Class VI – electric and internal combustion tractors
- Class VII – rough terrain forklift trucks

Employees must be trained on each type of powered truck they are expected to use before they are allowed to operate them.

Power sources

OSHA distinguishes between power sources when classifying industrial trucks because different power sources create different risks. Fueled by gas, diesel, LPG or CNG, internal combustion engines, these machines present risks associated with handling combustible liquids and gases, as well as exposure to noise and exhaust pollution, especially when used indoors. Electric motors create hazards associated with battery recharging including fire, explosion, hydrogen gas, and sulfuric acid splash.

Employees must be trained on how to safely refuel the trucks they operate and how to respond to spills, fires, chemical exposures and other hazards associated with their trucks' power sources.

Operations

Employees need both classroom and hands-on training in:

- Pre-operation inspection and maintenance
- Good operating practices to prevent accidents
- Hazards and recommended practices for each step of handling the load, including the composition of the load itself

Some areas of particular concern are safely placing the load on the truck, balancing the load, handling loads on inclined slopes, and operating in or near a loading dock area.

Workplace Conditions

As an employer, you must address the physical hazards in any area where powered industrial trucks are used. Employees must be trained on how your agency addresses those hazards. If they are working in field locations which are not under your agency's direct control, they must also know how to assess and address hazards themselves, including:

- Physical conditions such as obstructions, floor loading limits, clearance, etc.
- Pedestrian traffic patterns
- Ramps and grades
- Loading docks
- Narrow aisles
- Elevators
- Enclosed areas & any types of hazardous areas where your trucks would not be allowed to be used

Training Requirements

Employees must receive both formal training (lecture, video, on-line class etc.) and practical training which includes both a demonstration on the actual equipment and hands-on exercises. As an employer, you must evaluate and certify each operator's competence before allowing the operator to operate the equipment without direct supervision. You must also certify the operator's continued competence every three years. If an employee, who is operating a powered industrial truck injures a person or causes physical damage to any property including the truck itself, the employee must receive refresher training before being allowed to operate the truck again. Refresher training is also required if an employee shows any deficiency in safe operation of the truck during normal operations or during the three-year evaluation. Refresher training must include all components of the original training: formal training, demonstrations, and hands-on exercises.

Resources

A quick internet search reveals that many companies offer on-line, video and classroom training on forklifts. Fewer resources are available on powered pallet jacks. Unsurprisingly, no one seems to be offering training materials specifically geared to scale test weight carts. Fortunately, employers are allowed to develop their own training material as long as it meets the requirements of the standard. OSHA provides information on developing training on their website at:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/pit/assistance/index.html>

Other resources may be found through the National Safety Council (<http://www.nsc.org>), or by contracting the Association of General Contractors (<https://www.agc.org/>) chapter in your area.