

Powered Industrial Trucks

Forklifts, lift trucks, and motorized pallet jacks, also known as powered industrial trucks (PITs), are designed to efficiently carry, lift, or stack materials, such as pallets, boxes, or skids. PITs can be driven by an operator or controlled remotely by a walking operator (reference photos to the right). Although there are various types of PITs, they all share similar hazards, such as unsecured loads that may fall, equipment tipping over, or collisions with other equipment or vehicles. Not following safe work practices may result in material or property damage and injuries to you or your coworkers.

Statistics

Due to the hazardous nature, PITs have been on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Standards since 2014. In 2019, according to the National Safety Council (NSC), there were 79 work-related fatalities and 8,140 injuries involving forklifts, and OSHA issued 2,093 citations involving PITs. The most common types of incidents include PIT overturns, pedestrian and object collisions, and falling loads. Adequate training and following safe work practices will ensure incidents do not occur.

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review potential powered industrial truck hazards in your workplace and discuss how they can be avoided.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Training

Before operating a PIT, you must attend training specific to the equipment, such as a gas-powered forklift or motorized electric pallet jack. The training course includes a classroom component with a written exam and a hands-on performance evaluation. Training, which is required every 3-years, will ensure that you have the knowledge and experience necessary to safely operate a PIT. To request training, contact Environmental Health and Safety at ehs@northwestern.edu.

Working Safely Near PITs

Working near PITs can be just as hazardous as operating them. Avoid working and walking in PIT traffic areas, such as loading docks, if possible. Below are helpful tips to prevent injuries and near misses when you are working near PITs:

- ❖ Always maintain a safe distance.
- ❖ Establish a plan with PIT operators and identify safe travel routes and workplace hazards.
- ❖ Avoid distractions when walking, such as using mobile devices or reading documents.
- ❖ Stop and look both ways before you enter a PIT traffic zone or walk across an intersection.



Learn more: Review Northwestern's [Material Handling Equipment Program](#), OSHA's Powered Industrial Trucks [eTool](#), and complete the online [Pallet Jack Safety](#) and [Pedestrian Safety Around Forklifts](#) training courses.

Report all injuries on the Risk Management [website](#) or call 847.491.5582.

Safety at Home

Although you may not be operating or working near PITs at home, you will likely handle materials such as furniture, boxes, and yard waste, and it is important to follow safe work practices to keep you and your family safe.

- ✓ When moving items, avoid trip and fall hazards by planning ahead and identifying a clear work path.
- ✓ Seek help when lifting heavy or awkward loads, or use carts, dollies, or wheelbarrows to avoid lifting and carrying loads.
- ✓ Review the Spotlight on Safety topics on [Back Injuries and Lifting](#) and [Back Injury Prevention](#) for more information.

For Additional Information

Contact Environmental Health & Safety at ehs@northwestern.edu