

Material Handling Equipment

Material handling equipment, such as forklifts and pallet jacks, are designed to quickly and easily move materials when compared with doing it manually. While material handling equipment can improve efficiency, they can also result in damage to the material being moved, damage to the facility, and most importantly, injury to employees. To protect yourself and others working around you, material handling equipment operators must understand the safe operating procedures and hazards associated with the equipment, such as:

- Understanding the weights of the loads to be lifted and the load capacity of the equipment
- Proper stacking of materials on equipment, and
- Safe operation of equipment around others in the work area

Statistics

Due to the hazardous nature of material handling equipment, powered industrial trucks (e.g., forklifts), have been on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Top 10 Most Frequently Cited Standards since 2014. In 2018, according to the National Safety Council (NSC), there were 85 fatalities and 7,940 injuries involving forklifts, and OSHA issued 2,294 citations involving material handling equipment, such as forklifts. In the same year, here at Northwestern, 2 employees sustained injuries involving material handling equipment.

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

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review potential material handling equipment 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.

Safe Operators are Smooth Operators

To keep material handling equipment operators safe and aware of safe operating procedures, Risk Management has developed a [Material Handling Equipment Program](#). Additionally, all University employees that operate material handling equipment, such as forklifts, pallet jacks, and tractors, must attend training, which includes a performance evaluation of the operator operating the equipment.

Below are methods to keep you and your coworkers safe when operating material handling equipment:

- ❖ Complete the pre-use inspection [checklist](#) before use to ensure equipment is working properly. If items are found damaged or not operational, the equipment must be taken out of service and reported to your supervisor.
- ❖ Always operate equipment according to manufacturer's instructions.
- ❖ Operate at a safe speed and on stable surfaces to avoid tipping over.
- ❖ Stay alert and yield to pedestrians and other workers in the area. Honk your horn and look before you proceed.
- ❖ Never exceed the rated load capacity as indicated on the capacity plate and ensure loads are secured and balanced prior to operating.
- ❖ Have clear visibility of the work area and ensure you have enough clearance when raising and lowering loads.



Tech loading dock employees receive operator training from Risk Management

Learn more: Contact [Risk Management](#) to schedule operator training and complete the online [Forklift Operator Training](#).

Safety at Home

Many activities, such as moving furniture, spring cleaning, and yard work, may require handling bulky and heavy items. Below are some tips to keep you and your family safe:

- ✓ Have a plan. Take the clearest path when moving items and remove hazards that may cause you to trip and lose balance.
- ✓ When possible, use carts, dollies, and wheel barrels. Always ensure loads are secure and balanced prior to moving.
- ✓ Seek help when lifting heavy or awkward loads. Visit Risk Management's Spotlight on Safety for more information on [Back Injuries and Lifting](#).

For Additional Information

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