

Industrial Trucks

The industrial truck is one of the most commonly used vehicles for material handling and heavy moving. However, industrial truck use can result in serious injury and costly damage if operators are insufficiently trained and the truck is not properly controlled. A recent Liberty Mutual study found that accidents were overwhelmingly the operator's fault, rather than the environment or the truck. Because the driver is such an important part of the industry, it is important to have programs covering safety, training, and proper authorization for use.

Safety: Implementing and maintaining an industrial truck safety program will significantly reduce the probability of a loss involving industrial trucks. A good safety program should include:

- Operator training, selection, and supervision criteria
- Adequate lighting, noise control, and traffic flow
- Safety features on the truck
- Regular truck maintenance and inspections
- Supervisors should be familiar with hazards such as unsafe loading or unloading practices, misuse of equipment and excessive speed
- Supervisors should enforce general traffic control rules and investigate all accidents, property damage and near misses, and take corrective action.

Training: Operator training is the most important element of the program. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), training should include:

Classroom Instruction

- Company policies and operating conditions
- Fundamentals of truck and component design
- Location and function of truck controls and safety features
- Loading procedures and capacity limitations
- Center of gravity and stability

Field Instruction/Testing

- Pre-use check of horns, lights, brakes and back up alarms
- Use of controls and maneuvering the truck with a load
- Dock safety
- Obeying traffic control rules and laws

Authorization: Drivers should be authorized to use a specific industrial truck only upon satisfactory completion of training. Many companies issue a license or certificate to authorized operators. Retrain and recertify drivers when the following conditions arise:

- When the vehicle is operated in an unsafe manner
- After an accident or near miss
- After an evaluation shows retraining is needed
- Assignment of a different type of truck or changes in the workplace
- An evaluation is required at least every 3 years

Source: Wausau's "Focus on Safety", 3-06



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