

# TO THE POINT ABOUT THE SAFE OPERATION OF POWERED PALLET JACKS FACT SHEET

LENGTH: 15 MINUTES

PRODUCTION YEAR: 2022

## PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

Our workplace is full of hazards, hazards that can hurt us or kill us. Controlling these hazards and preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program. One such hazard is the one presented by the unsafe operation of powered pallet jacks, also known as pallet trucks. These vehicles have the potential to be very dangerous, so it is critical that operators always remain focused on their safe operation.

This program includes important safety topics when dealing with powered pallet jacks, such as how to perform pre-operational inspections, the proper PPE to use while on the job, how to lift and travel with a load, and how to safely maneuver around pedestrians, inclines, and loading docks.

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

After watching the program, the participant should be able to explain the following:

- How to perform the pre-operational inspection;
- The proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to use while on the job;
- What the T-bar support handle is;
- How to lift and travel with a load;
- Maneuvering around pedestrians, inclines and loading docks.

## INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT:

### INTRODUCTION

- Off-center and unbalanced loads, inattentive pedestrians, unqualified operators, sloped surfaces, loading docks, and operator distraction are all potential causes of injury and property damage related to powered pallet jack operation.
- These vehicles have the potential to be very dangerous, so it is critical that operators always remain focused on their safe operation.
- As part of our organization's Powered Industrial Truck training program, you will receive training on the types of pallet trucks you will be authorized to operate.
- Some common varieties of powered pallet trucks include the walkie style truck, the walkie/stacker type truck, and the walkie/rider pallet truck.
- While a powered pallet jack is much smaller than a forklift, order selector or reach truck, it is still a member of the powered industrial truck family, and you must be specifically trained and authorized before operating one.
- This training will include the important information found on the vehicle's data plate, the function of the various operating controls, and the pallet truck's driving and handling characteristics.
- You will also receive hands-on training on the specific type of unit you will be operating.

### PRE-OPERATIONAL INSPECTION

- Once you have successfully demonstrated your ability to operate the equipment, you must make it a point to always operate it as safely as possible. And safe operation begins with a pre-operational inspection.
- Start by locating the vehicle's data plate. It provides important information, such as the unit's make, model and maximum lifting capacity. Part of the inspection is to ensure that the vehicle's data plate is present and legible.

- Next, make sure the operator's manual is in its appropriate location. It must remain with the vehicle at all times. It is an important resource when you need specific vehicle information not found on the data plate. You must also make sure that all warning labels are in place and legible.
- During the pre-operational inspection, make a circle around the vehicle, looking for any fluid leaks, cracked or bent parts, or any other damage. Carefully inspect the wheels, tires and forks.
- Also, remove any items that may have been left on the truck by previous operators, such as tools, cups, boxes or other clutter.
- Make sure the load backrest extension and all other safety devices are attached and working properly.
- Test all the control functions for proper operation. This includes raising and lowering the forks, testing the forward and reverse controls, and checking the braking functions and the emergency reverse button. Don't forget to test the horn as well.

### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

- No matter what type of powered pallet jack you intend to operate, it is important to wear the proper personal protection for the work environment and the type of work to be performed.
- Pallet truck operators should wear safety eyewear at all times.
- When handling material, gloves should be worn to reduce the risk of splinters or cuts.
- To protect your feet, steel-toed footwear should be worn. For additional foot protection, metatarsal guards may be worn.
- The most common injuries associated with powered pallet jack operation are broken bones when feet are struck by falling loads or run over by a tire or wheel.
- Another serious foot hazard is the pinch point created by the scissor action of the load wheels being raised or lowered. Keep all body parts as well as other workers well clear of this hazard area.

### **T-BAR SUPPORT HANDLE**

- There are many different types and styles of powered pallet jacks and trucks; however, almost all types will be equipped with a T-bar support handle.
- The T-bar support handle contains an important safety feature, an emergency reverse switch. This safety feature helps operators avoid being crushed between the truck and a stationary object.
- When pressure is applied to the reverse switch, the unit will briefly move away from the operator in the opposite direction, and then stop.
- The T-bar handle also serves as an emergency brake. When the handle is moved either in a complete vertical or horizontal position, the truck will stop moving. This will stop the truck should the operator lose grip on the handle or fall while walking with the vehicle.

### **DRIVING AND HANDLING CHARACTERISTICS**

- In order to operate a powered pallet jack safely, you must make a point of understanding its unique driving and handling characteristics. These vehicles operate much differently than automobiles, forklifts and other vehicles you may already be familiar with.
- One unique feature is that powered pallet jacks can be operated with the load in front or trailing behind. This means that the wheels that steer the pallet truck may either be in the front or in the rear of the vehicle.
- The preferred operating orientation is to walk ahead of the truck and to the side, with the forks trailing. This requires one handed operation. When traveling in this manner, the steering wheels are in the front of the truck and the vehicle has a tendency to make sharp turns and cut corners abruptly.
- This requires the operator to make a wide swing to avoid collisions while turning.
- When it is necessary to travel with the forks leading, be sure to keep both hands on the T-bar. Traveling in this orientation is more challenging. When traveling in this manner, the steering wheels are in the rear, and the rear end will swing wide to the outside of the turn.

- For this reason, the truck must be kept tight to the inside of the turn to prevent the rear end from colliding with property or pedestrians.
- No matter the vehicle's orientation, always face the direction of travel. This allows an unobstructed field of vision.
- Walking backwards doesn't allow you to see upcoming hazards and can lead to a fall.
- Whether walking ahead or behind the vehicle, maintain a safe walking speed while staying alert for pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- Make it a point to stop, turn, accelerate, and brake smoothly and carefully.
- The controls can be sensitive, and caution must be used. Accelerating too quickly can cause you to lose control and strike objects or pedestrians.

## **LIFTING A LOAD**

- Before lifting a load, make sure it doesn't exceed your truck's capacity. Remember, the pallet jack's capacity is listed on the data plate. If you are unsure of the weight of the intended load, you must seek assistance to determine it.
- The data plate will list its maximum lifting capacity for a 24-inch (600mm) load center. The load center is the distance from the backstop to the center of gravity of the load.
- For example, a standard North American pallet of 48-inch length has a 24-inch (600mm) load center when loaded in a balanced manner and seated against the backstop.
- To prevent the load from falling when it is raised or moved, make sure it is centered on the pallet and is stable.
- Be aware that loads often need to be reorganized so that they are centered and may need to be banded, strapped or stretch-wrapped to maintain stability.
- Before lifting, insert the forks completely into the pallet so that it rests securely against the back stop. This adds stability to the load and ensures that the lifting wheels or "scissor wheels" are positioned properly.
- The pallet jack's lifting wheels will damage the pallet if they are out of position.
- Also, do not carry loads that are stacked taller than the pallet truck's backstop. This is because most pallet trucks have no means to protect the operator from falling loads.

## **TRAVELING**

- Once the load is raised, make it a point to scan your intended travel path for obstructions, pedestrians, moving equipment and other hazards before proceeding.
- Do not raise or lower the load while the truck is in motion. This could damage the pallet should it hit the floor and may cause the load to become unstable.
- Once you have reached your destination, make sure to come to a complete stop before lowering the pallet.
- Here are a few things to keep in mind when operating a walkie stacker or walkie rider type pallet truck.
- When operating from the riding position, always face forward and only operate the truck from the approved platform.
- Travel at a slow, safe speed.
- Be aware of all body parts and keep them inside the running lines of the vehicle to avoid striking objects as you pass or turn.
- Come to a complete stop at all intersections and sound the horn. Always yield to pedestrians.
- Make sure the pallet truck has come to a complete stop before dismounting.
- When operating a walkie stacker, be aware that the load wheels and base arms create a wide base of support and can create handling challenges in tight quarters.
- To place or lift a pallet from an elevated rack, there must be sufficient clearance under the rack for the base arms.
- It's often necessary to straddle a pallet in order to reach an elevated load. This requires that pallets be well organized, spaced appropriately, and oriented properly in order to fit between the base arms.

- Lifting, turning, and moving with a load all negatively affect the stability of a walkie stacker.
- Always come to a complete stop before lifting or lowering a load and do not turn with a raised load.
- After withdrawing a pallet from a rack, immediately lower it to a safe traveling height before backing up further.

## **PEDESTRIANS**

- Pedestrians are a potential hazard that powered pallet jack operators must consider at all times.
- When approaching intersections, aisleways or blind corners, always stop and sound your horn to alert others of your presence.
- Before moving the vehicle, make sure the area is clear of pedestrians and always look behind you before backing up.
- Also make sure the area around the pallet jack is clear of pedestrians and coworkers when raising or lowering the forks. The moving forks and the scissor action of the load wheels being lifted or let down present a serious hazard.
- Never drive a pallet jack toward a pedestrian who is positioned in front of a stationary object such as a table or wall.
- Also, never allow a co-worker to hitch a ride on your truck.
- You must also be aware of other work vehicles traveling in your work area. Always maintain a three-vehicle length distance from other vehicles so you can safely stop or maneuver if needed.

## **INCLINES**

- Traveling up and down inclines safely can be challenging for pallet jack operators.
- When traveling with an empty truck or a light, stable load, keep the forks facing downhill so your body remains on the uphill side of the truck.
- For load stability, it may sometimes become necessary to travel with the load facing uphill. When this is the case, always stand to the side and do not place your body directly behind the pallet truck while on a slope.
- Regardless of orientation, always travel straight up or down an incline.
- Never turn or travel at an angle while on an incline. This can easily cause the load to spill or truck to tip over.

## **LOADING DOCKS**

- Loading docks can also present some unique challenges that require extreme caution on the part of the pallet jack operator. These areas often contain tight quarters combined with heavy traffic of other material handling vehicles.
- Before entering a trailer with a powered pallet jack, make sure the trailer's brakes are set and its wheels are chocked.
- If the trailer is not hooked up to a cab, a jack stand must be used to support the trailer.
- Make sure to inspect the flooring of any trailer or railcar for such defects as rotten wood, cracks or other structural flaws.
- All bridge plates and dock boards should also be inspected before use. They must be in good condition, provide sufficient weight capacity and be properly secured to the dock and trailer.

## **PARKING**

- When parking a powered pallet jack, only park it in approved areas. Never park the vehicle in aisleways or in front of doors, stairs, exits or emergency equipment.
- Also, make sure to lower the forks and set the parking brake if one exists.
- Be sure to turn off the key and remove it, if required by your organization.
- The owner's manual of many pallet trucks states that the battery should be disconnected after parking.
- If necessary, connect the charger if you have been trained and authorized to do so.

## **CONCLUSION**

- As an operator of a powered pallet jack, keeping you and your co-workers safe while avoiding collisions and property damage is your number one priority.
- In this program, we have discussed safe operating practices for powered pallet jacks and pointed out that following these safe operating practices can prevent injuries and fatalities. After all, preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program, which is why you must make it a point to be safe.