



These days, there are many ways to expose your company to unnecessary liability and one of these ways is to ignore forklift equipment that is potentially unsafe.

The problem is that many companies have no idea whether their lift trucks are safe or not.

Sometimes forklift safety issues rise to the surface when there is an accident, particularly when someone is injured.

Sometimes these issues become known when an outside safety inspector finds a deficiency during a routine safety inspection.

Regardless, there should be some sense of urgency to find out where you stand so you can deal with any shortfalls before they cause injury and impact your business in a negative way financially.

Suppose we consider the liability exposure that a typical building supply company might have operating (3) 10,000 capacity forklifts that are roughly (7) years old.

## The five most common forklift liability issues to watch out for are:

### Forklift Forks

Forks should be inspected yearly and sometimes more frequently in severe applications. Testing forklift forks can be complicated because there are so many different types and methods for manufacturing them. Each different type requires a different testing method. However, as a general rule, using a standard taper forged fork that has an ITA hook mount as an example, it only takes 10% wear on the blade to result in a 20% loss of capacity. In addition, if the fork is bent, cracked or modified then they must be replaced. As well, I often encounter low capacity forks mounted on a higher capacity forklift where, in the past, someone has swapped these forks with another truck not realizing that the forklift's lifting capacity is far beyond the capacity of the smaller forks.

### Data Plates & Capacity Plates

Sometimes these plates are missing and sometimes they are unreadable after years of use. As well, I often find incomplete plates or plates that are stamped incorrectly. It is critical that every operator knows the lifting capability of the forklift otherwise he will be a danger to himself and his co-workers. The capacity plates should be clear, easy to read, complete and located in a visible spot that meets with manufacturer approval.

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# FORKLIFT LIABILITY

## Are You Prepared?

## Equipment Modifications

Forklifts cannot be modified without receiving written approval from the original equipment manufacturer. As an example, I have encountered a situation where a company employee welded a light bracket onto the mast or possibly the driver's overhead guard of the lift truck. This type of modification voids the rating of these components and may expose the operator to potentially life threatening circumstances in the event that these items fail as a result.

## Maintenance Records

Does the business have well organized records to prove that the forklifts are being serviced to meet the manufacturer's requirements?

## Pre-shift Inspections

Is the company able to produce records to show that pre-shift inspections are being done at the start of every shift and by every operator?

These are just a few examples that every company should take into consideration.

At the end of the day, it's partly about protecting your company from financial risk, but it's mostly about making sure your employees are safe and well protected from danger. After all, do you really want to be the one answering for a forklift related injury or possible fatality? Not likely.

To find out more about how to protect your company from other unnecessary forklift liability, please take some time to contact an experienced forklift professional.

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Questions? Feel free to contact Scott McLeod, President of Fleetman Consulting Inc., by calling (604)614-3530 or via his website, [fleetmanconsulting.com](http://fleetmanconsulting.com).

Fleetman Consulting Inc., based in Surrey, BC is an independent company that specializes in forklift fleet management. ♦



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