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## DRIVING A FORKLIFT TAKES TRAINING

The ability to drive a car or truck does not qualify you to operate a forklift. It may be tempting to climb aboard a forklift and drive around, but don't do it unless you have been properly trained and are authorized to do so. A forklift operates differently from other motor vehicles. It doesn't stop as quickly, it can tip over more easily, and its turning radius is different.

Operating a forklift without training is asking for trouble. Besides tipping over, it's easy to run into a person or drop a load when you don't know what you are doing.

### HERE ARE SOME REMINDERS ABOUT SAFELY OPERATING A FORKLIFT-FOR THOSE WHO ARE TRAINED AND AUTHORIZED TO DO SO:

- ✓ Use a checklist before operating the machine to determine if it is in good working order and safe to operate. If it is not, remove it from service until it can be repaired.
- ✓ To lift a load the forks should extend  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the distance under the load. After slowly lifting the load, tilt it back so it remains on the forks. This avoids punctures.
- ✓ Keep the forks low so you can see where you are going and prevent tipping accidents.
- ✓ When working outdoors, observe speed limits, slow down for corners, rough or sloping surfaces and large loads. Honk the horn at intersections.
- ✓ One aspect of operating a forklift which differs from other vehicles is the need to drive with the load uphill. With a load, go forward up a slope, but back down the slope. Without a load, the forks should be pointed downhill.
- ✓ Stay inside the operator's cage. This means keep your head, arms and legs inside and never reach through the mast. And always wear your seatbelt. Statistics show that your chances of surviving a forklift accident are greater if you remain belted inside the machine.
- ✓ Don't pick up passengers because they can fall and be crushed by the forklift.

### HERE ARE SOME REMINDERS ABOUT SAFELY WORKING AROUND A FORKLIFT:

- ✓ Watch for forklifts and do not expect the operator to see you. Listen for, but do not rely on, horns and backup alarms.
- ✓ Do not step in front of a forklift and do not walk beside it.
- ✓ Do not walk under the elevated forks or loads of a forklift.

Whether you are operating a forklift, or working in an area where one is being used, you have a responsibility for your own safety as well as the safety of those around you. Watch out for each other to prevent collisions and crushing accidents.





## HAZARDS CAN BE OVER YOUR HEAD

**S**ome of the worst hazards in any work area are the ones that are the easiest to miss — because they are overhead. Working with or around a forklift, crane or rig that operates above your head requires special attention to the dangers of overhead lines.

Even simply bumping your head on an overhead obstruction can cause bruising or worse injuries.

### **5 Ways to Avoid Power Lines:**

1. Before working near a power line, call the power company to have the current turned off or the lines guarded.
2. Follow all safety regulations for working around power lines. These regulations will include keeping a specific distance away from power lines of certain voltages. This is because the power can arc through the air as it seeks the shortest route to the ground.
3. Regulations may also require a signal person to be stationed at a safe distance to direct the operator of the crane or other equipment and warn if he is getting too close to the line.
4. Always check for overhead electrical hazards when moving scaffolds, high loads and other objects which extend high into the air.
5. Don't forget indoor electrical dangers. Touching a light fixture with a forklift or metal ladder can be fatal.

Use your head to avoid hazards over your head.



## USE A CHECKLIST TO CHECK IT OUT

Just like the pilot of an airplane, the operator of any piece of machinery or equipment should complete a “pre-flight” checklist before beginning work. A pre-flight check helps ensure the machinery and stand-by systems are in safe condition. It can also help prevent time-consuming and costly breakdowns.

These checks are standard operating procedure on vehicles such as trucks and forklifts, but they are also important for heavy equipment such as rigs and cranes. A check can also be useful on small equipment like an automobile or a power tool.

Check with your supervisor to be sure you’re using the proper checklist for a given piece of equipment. If one is not available, the operator’s manual may offer suggestions for creating one.

### **For vehicles, one kind of pre-work check is known as the circle check:**

- ✓ Move in a circle around the equipment, checking for any signs of problems. In the case of a motor vehicle, you would be checking to make sure that tire pressure is adequate, that lights and turn signals are working correctly, that there is sufficient oil, fuel and battery fluid, and that windows are free of obstructions.
- ✓ Another type of circle check is useful before starting up any vehicle. Walk around it, and look over the surroundings. Make sure there is nothing you will hit when the vehicle begins to move, such as another vehicle, a child playing behind the vehicle or an overhead obstruction like a power line. This type of circle check is especially important if you will be backing up.

### **For equipment or machinery, here are some examples of things that should be on a pre-flight checklist:**

- ✓ Make sure that it will not cause danger to another person when you start the machinery. If anyone is doing repairs or adjustments on the equipment, it should be labeled with lockout-tagout information, and the power should be disconnected.
- ✓ Check over the machinery for any signs of wear or damage that could affect safe operation. In the case small equipment or power tools, you would pay particular attention to the condition of electrical cords and connections.
- ✓ Make sure that machine guards are in place and functioning correctly.
- ✓ When examining machinery prior to starting it up, use only a safe source of light. Never check a vehicle battery using a match or lighter for light-you could be injured in an explosion.
- ✓ Also make sure that you are ready to work safely. Wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as eye protection when using a power tool.

Be sure to report any problems you find in your pre-flight check and correct them before beginning work. Equipment checklists vary widely in content. The points you check before running a table saw will be very different from what you check when starting up a crane. But the principle is the same. Make sure that the machinery is ready to run safely and smoothly.

## THE BASICS OF SLINGS AND RIGGING

**M**oving heavy materials on a job site can be dangerous. There are usually no stairs, ladders or elevators available to do the job safely. That's why riggings, slings and the people who control them are some of the most important people on the job. They know that a proper lift happens with planning, not by chance. They are familiar with all the tools and equipment used, as well as the procedures involved.

A competent rigger will tell you it's essential to always know your lift — never guess. Every lift can be divided into three main parts:

the lifting device

the hitch

the load weight

The lifting device can be a crawler or truck crane, a pedestal-mounted crane, or an overhead crane. Its capabilities and condition should be clearly understood. Will it lift high enough? What is its horizontal reach? What are its load limits?

The load weight can be obtained through documentation, from information contained on the load, by actually weighing the load, or by engineering calculation. The weight of the load must be within the rated capacity of any rigging, including slings, hooks and shackles.

Once the total weight to be moved is known, along with how far it must go, the hitching method can be determined. That means deciding how it is to be connected to the lifting hook and how the sling will grip or be attached to the load.

In selecting the sling, make sure it is the best type and style to handle that specific load. It should have proper end attachments as well as attachment hardware like clevises, hooks or rings. Slings should be marked to identify the manufacturer, the date they should be maintained or removed from service, the stock number and most important, the load rating and types of hitches to be used.

Always inspect the sling before deciding to use it. Run your hands along the fabric and feel for tears, holes, snags and frayed areas. If the sling has been exposed to sharp edges, you may find broken or worn stitches. Most slings are made with a red warning string in the material. This will show through if the sling is heavily worn. Defective slings must be taken out of service immediately, cut into pieces and thrown away.

### Here are some more reminders:

Rig up, not down. Always attach the sling to the load first, and then attach it to the hook.

Check everything before attempting a lift. Put a light strain on the rigging and make sure that blocking, sling and load protection, and all safety devices are in place and that the load is balanced and free of any restraints.

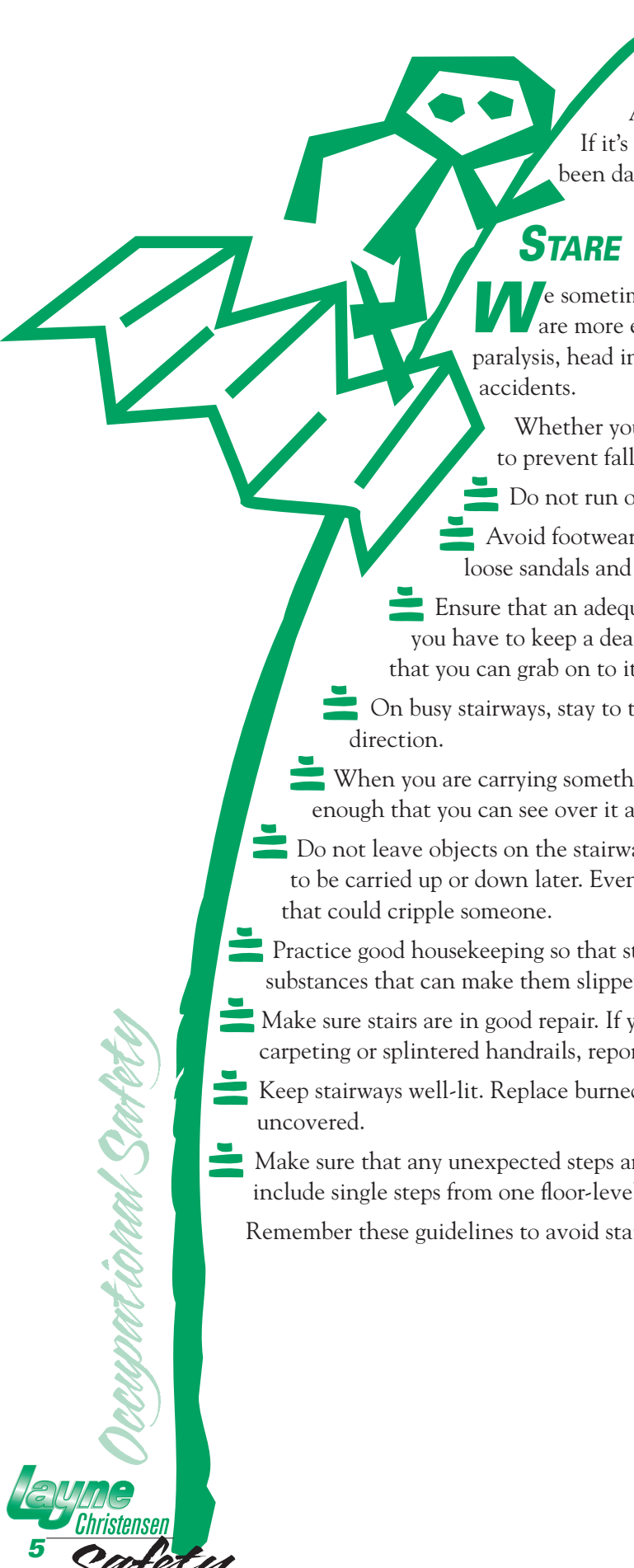
Make sure no one is near suspended loads or loads about to be lifted. Everyone must be alert for possible snagging.

Do not place hands or fingers between the sling and load while the sling is being tightened.

Let the lifting device and rigging do the job. Don't use brute strength to prevent swinging or movement.

Use a tagline or tether to control any movement. Keep all hands and toes out from under the load when it is suspended.





Lift slowly with a steady application of power. “Shock” loading must be avoided.

After the lift is completed, check the sling for any damage. If it’s still in good condition, store it where it will be safe. If it has been damaged, make sure it is tagged and taken out of service.

## STARE DOWN STAIRWAY HAZARDS

**W**e sometimes tend to think of falls from stairs as minor accidents that are more embarrassing than anything else. But broken bones, paralysis, head injuries, and even death have resulted from stairway accidents.

Whether you work in the office or in the field, here are some guidelines to prevent falls on stairways:

- ≡ Do not run or hurry on the stairs.
- ≡ Avoid footwear that is likely to cause a fall. This includes untied shoes, loose sandals and shoes with slippery soles and high heels.
- ≡ Ensure that an adequate hand rail is in place, and use it. This doesn’t mean that you have to keep a death-grip on it. Instead, just run your hand along the rail so that you can grab on to it for balance if necessary.
- ≡ On busy stairways, stay to the right to avoid running into someone going the opposite direction.
- ≡ When you are carrying something up or down stairs, make sure that the load is small enough that you can see over it and maintain your balance.
- ≡ Do not leave objects on the stairway. Some people have the habit of leaving items on the stairs to be carried up or down later. Even leaving a pair of shoes on the stairs can cause an accident that could cripple someone.
- ≡ Practice good housekeeping so that steps are free of ice, water, leaves, oil, grease and other substances that can make them slippery.
- ≡ Make sure stairs are in good repair. If you notice any unsafe conditions such as broken risers, loose carpeting or splintered handrails, report them immediately so they can be repaired.
- ≡ Keep stairways well-lit. Replace burned-out light bulbs and keep windows in stairways clean and uncovered.
- ≡ Make sure that any unexpected steps are well-marked with colored tape or paint. This would include single steps from one floor-level to the next.

Remember these guidelines to avoid stairway accidents both on and off-the-job.



## FRAMER DIES OF ILLNESS AFTER INJURY

**A** man died after being hospitalized with a back injury from a construction incident, but he died from an unrelated cause. Alejandro Becerra, 53, a framer, died from complications relating to pre-existing conditions.

Becerra had been helping to erect a commercial building when the construction incident occurred. An eight-foot-tall wall frame tipped over, injuring four workers. Three of the four suffered mostly cuts and scrapes, but Becerra was taken to hospital with a broken back. After a few days he was transferred to a regional medical center, where he died from diabetes and a heart condition.

It's a sad truth that illnesses and general ill-health kill more workers than industrial accidents. Avoiding or reversing the progress of these conditions may be as simple as changing your diet and exercise habits.

For those with chronic conditions, talking to medical professionals and following their advice is usually the best course of action. Many chronic conditions can be managed successfully.



## 6 WAYS TO BUILD A BETTER DIET FOR BETTER HEALTH

1. Plan meals at least a day in advance, or do preparations on the weekend if your work nights are too full.
2. Work with everyone in your household to prepare good food. Everyone can take a turn to plan and prepare healthy meals.
3. Set the table for breakfast the night before, and lay out ingredients and supplies so you don't have to think too much in the morning.
4. Pack your lunch the night before to avoid fast food the next day. Include cut vegetables and fresh fruit, whole grains and some protein foods like peanut butter and nuts.
5. Start some dinners ahead of time so you can complete them easily when you get home. Cook rice and pasta and slice vegetables to eat raw or stir fry. Keep fresh, frozen or canned fruit on hand for desserts and bedtime snacks.
6. Start substituting plain water and fruit juice for coffee and soft drinks. Cut down on the caffeine beverages, but do this gradually to avoid withdrawal headaches.

Good health is important to for both your mental and physical energy. Nutrition is a great place to start on the road to healthful habits.

## COLOR CODING COMPLIANCE

**February = White & Yellow**

**A**s part of the Assured Grounding Program, this month, all electric cords and electrical hand tools must be inspected and marked with white (quarterly color) and yellow (monthly color) tape. This is not a voluntary program! Using the color coding system ensures that anyone who plans to work with a piece of electrical equipment knows that it has been inspected within the last month, and is safe to use.

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I have read, understand, and had the opportunity to ask questions  
about the material presented.

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*Signature*

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*Name Printed*

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*Date*

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*District Location*

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Did you attend a monthly safety meeting?     Yes     No

E-mail comments or recommendations to the Safety & Environmental  
Health Sciences at [www.laynesafety.com](http://www.laynesafety.com)

**Report any Near Miss incidents on the Layne Safety website.**