Forklift Safety – Parking Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Parking a forklift might seem like the easiest part of the job – just turn it off and walk away, right? Not quite. Improperly parked forklifts have rolled, tipped, blocked emergency exits, leaked hazardous fluids, or even been restarted by unauthorized personnel. All of this can lead to serious injuries, property damage, or worse. Whether you're stopping for a break or shutting down for the day, how you park matters. One small mistake can put people, equipment, and your reputation at risk. Safe parking isn't the end of the job – it's your final safety check.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

An unattended forklift that's parked incorrectly can turn into a serious hazard in seconds. These machines are heavy, powerful, and unforgiving when they move unexpectedly or block critical areas.

Unsecured Forklifts Can Move on Their Own

If the parking brake isn't fully set – especially on an incline – a forklift can roll and crash into workers, structures, or other equipment. Even a small slope can send a multi-ton machine into motion if gravity takes over.

Forklift Tines and Mast Hazards

Forks left raised or tilted can create sharp, invisible hazards. Workers walking by can trip or be impaled if the forks are left elevated. An unlowered mast can also interfere with overhead systems like sprinkler heads or electrical lines.

Blocked Access and Fire Hazards

Improperly parked forklifts can block exits, aisles, or emergency equipment. In an evacuation or emergency, those few extra seconds of obstruction can put lives at risk. A forklift parked in the wrong spot might even become a fire hazard if it's near flammable materials or charging stations.

Unauthorized Use or Tampering

Leaving the keys in the ignition or failing to follow lockout procedures opens the door for untrained personnel to hop on and take a ride – leading to accidents, injuries, or major liability.

Improper parking is never “just a shortcut.” It’s a serious safety risk that follows you long after you leave the forklift.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Parking a forklift safely isn’t just about flipping a switch or walking away — it’s a deliberate process that protects people, property, and equipment long after you’re off the clock. Here’s how to do it right, every single time:

Use the Full Shutdown Process — No Shortcuts

Rushing leads to mistakes. No matter how quick the stop is, follow the same steps every time:

1. **Lower the forks completely —** Leaving them raised creates a tripping hazard and can lead to bent or broken tines.
2. **Neutralize all controls —** This helps prevent unexpected movement if someone accidentally leans on the lever.
3. **Set the parking brake —** Especially critical on any incline or uneven surface.
4. **Shut off the engine/power —** An idling forklift still poses a hazard. Turn it off.
5. **Remove the key —** Never leave the key in an unattended forklift. This prevents unauthorized or accidental operation.

Example: You park the forklift, skip setting the brake because the floor is “pretty flat,” and walk away for a quick break. A coworker walks by, bumps the controls, and the machine rolls into a racking system — all because one step was skipped. Don’t leave a loaded weapon unlocked.

Be Smart About Where You Park

Parking in the wrong place creates long-term risks. Forklifts should never be parked:

- In front of fire extinguishers or eye wash stations
- In pedestrian walkways or exits
- Near emergency panels or first aid supplies
- In high-traffic or blind corner zones

Designated parking zones should be clearly marked. If they’re not — or if space is limited — let your supervisor know. Poor layout shouldn’t force unsafe decisions.

Don’t Forget the Environment

Outdoor parking? Watch for soft ground, water accumulation, sloped surfaces, or icy conditions. These can cause forklifts to shift, tip, or sink into the surface after shutdown. Inside, avoid parking on freshly cleaned or slick floors, especially if they’re sloped.

Think Long-Term Storage Too

Parking for the night or weekend? Go the extra mile:

- Disconnect propane tanks or battery sources if required by company policy.
- Use wheel chocks or blocks.
- Post signage or barriers to prevent tampering or accidental use.

FINAL WORD

Parking a forklift safely isn’t optional — it’s the final step that protects you, your coworkers, and your workplace. One missed brake or forgotten key can undo a day’s worth of safe driving. Shut it down right, every time.
