

Top Tips for Safe Lift Truck Mounting and Dismounting

Many musculoskeletal, and other, injuries occur when operators are getting on and off lift trucks. Although mounting and dismounting techniques may vary depending on the particular truck, the following steps should be considered to reduce the risk of incident or injury

Before you start

Operators must be properly qualified before they even think about driving a truck, but has their training included a demonstration of correct mounting and dismounting? During training, trainees should get on and off a truck under supervision so that technique can be assessed and corrected.

Refer to the manufacturer's operator manual for specific advice on mounting and dismounting the truck. Operators should be trained suitably for the particular truck(s) that they will be using.

Conduct routine pre-use inspections before using a lift truck. This will include a visual inspection of key parts of the truck that must be done before the truck is mounted.

Ensure the required protective clothing is being worn. Hanging jewelry should not be worn and items should be removed from back pockets.

Mounting the truck

Check the environment and the floor around the truck. Debris and uneven surfaces can cause slips and trips. Also, be aware of other vehicles, pedestrians and even existing loads on the forks.

Check the truck's state of repair and consider how this may affect mounting and dismounting. For example, do you need to take extra care due to erosion on non-slip surfaces?

Face the truck when getting on and off. If steps are available, they should be used. Good secure hand and foot holds should be established. Always maintain three points of contact with the truck when mounting/dismounting for stability.

Be aware that loose or bulky clothing, such as overalls, can catch when getting on and off the truck.

Once you're in the cab

Adopt the correct operating position by using all of the available adjustments. This is important for both safety and ergonomics. The seat, steering column and armrests should never be adjusted when travelling.

Sit down in the seat, lean forward and shift hips to the back of the seat to set the spine in correct alignment. Adjust the seat by sliding it forwards so your feet are resting comfortably, and the pedals are within easy reach

Raise the seat to a comfortable height, checking for adequate head clearance and maximum vision – ensure that pedals are still within easy reach. Ensure the weight limit setting is correctly adjusted

Adjust the steering wheel so that the steering assistor is within easy reach of either hand at the furthest point away from the body – the aim is to eliminate the need to lean forward. Adjust the backrest to a position slightly tilted backwards to avoid excessive bending of the head and neck

If a safety belt is available, it should be worn. Seatbelts are a legal requirement on most trucks since 2002 and for older trucks with any risk of overturning, operator restraining systems should be installed.

Make sure mirrors are adjusted as required. Make sure all areas of the body are within the operator's cabin before the truck starts moving.

Dismounting

Ideally find an even surface for dismount as landing awkwardly can result in injuries. Floor debris or spillages in the area of dismounting could also lead to slips and falls. Of course, check for other traffic before exiting the cab.

Never jump down from the truck. Three points of contact should be maintained during dismount for stability and to protect from musculoskeletal injury.

For more information on lift truck operator training to improve safety and efficiency during mounting and dismounting forklifts, visit www.ribblevalleytrainingcentre.com