

Top tips for maintaining your forklift: A Comprehensive Guide

Table of contents:

- #1 Regular Cleanings
- #2 Oil Changes
- #3 Daily Checks
- #4 Fork Inspections
- #5 Hose Inspections
- #6 Monthly Forklift Maintenance
- #7 Scheduled Maintenance
- Forklift safety rules by OSHA standards
- Conclusion
- Frequently asked questions about forklift maintenance
- Bonus Tip For Productivity Working With Forklifts

Technically, forklifts need your attention to keep them running safely and smoothly for years to come.

Unfortunately, many businesses neglect their forklift maintenance. The reason is usually the lack of time, resources, or knowledge which causes all sorts of problems, from malfunctioning brakes to leaking hydraulic systems, leading to worker injuries or worse.

Nobody wants accidents, right?

In our blog post, we share our top tips for maintaining your forklift whether it be internal combustion or electric. You'll also learn safety rules according to OSHA's (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) [standard forklift guidelines](#). By following these simple steps, you can prevent breakdowns, minimize repair costs, and ensure the safety of your workers. So let's get started!

#1 Regular Cleanings

Probably, the most important aspects of forklift maintenance is regular cleaning. Regular cleaning ensures that dirt, dust, and debris don't accumulate in the engine compartment, which can cause serious problems if left unchecked. Here are some tips for keeping your forklift clean:

- Use a soft-bristled brush to gently sweep the forklift's exterior, taking care not to scratch the paint.
- Use mild detergent and water to clean the forklift's exterior, taking care to avoid sensitive areas like the engine and electrical components.
- Use compressed air to blow out any dirt or debris from the engine compartment, taking care not to damage any sensitive components.

We recommend performing regular cleanings at least once a week or more, depending on the operating conditions.

#2 Oil Changes

Regular oil changes are another essential aspect of forklift maintenance. The oil in your forklift's engine lubricates its moving parts, reduces friction, and helps prevent wear and tear. Over time, the oil can become contaminated with dirt, debris, and other particles, reducing its effectiveness. Here are some tips for performing oil changes on your forklift:

- Always refer to your forklift's operator manual for specific oil change instructions and recommended oil types.
- Change the oil and oil filter at least once every six months or more frequently if the forklift is used frequently or in harsh operating conditions.
- Dispose of used oil and filters properly, following all local regulations.

By performing regular oil changes, you can help ensure that your forklift's engine remains in good working condition and prevent costly repairs down the line.

#3 Daily Checks

Daily checks on your forklift are an important part of preventative maintenance. By checking your forklift's fluids, tire pressure, and other important components every day, you can catch and address any issues early on before they turn into major problems. Here are some components that should be checked daily:

- Tire pressure: check tire pressure with a tire pressure gauge and inflate to the recommended PSI.
- Hydraulic fluid level: check hydraulic fluid levels with the dipstick and add more if necessary.
- Brake system: check for proper brake operation by pressing the brake pedal and checking for unusual sounds or vibrations.
- Lights: check that all lights are functioning properly, including headlights, brake lights, and turn signals.

These daily inspections can help ensure that the vehicle remains in good working condition and identify any potential issues before they become major problems.

#4 Fork Inspections

The forks on your forklift must be inspected regularly to ensure their safety and effectiveness. Do this when performing fork inspections:

- Inspect the forks for any visible damage, such as cracks, bends, or signs of wear.
- Check that the forks are straight and parallel to each other.
- Measure the thickness of the forks to ensure that they are not worn down beyond the manufacturer's recommended specifications.
- Check the heel thickness, which is the thickness of the portion of the fork that contacts the ground.

Fork inspections can help ensure the safety and effectiveness of your forklift and prevent potentially dangerous accidents.

#5 Hose Inspections

The hoses on your forklift help ensure that the hydraulic system works fine. Here are some tips for performing hose inspections:

Inspect all hoses for any visible damage, such as cracks, leaks, or signs of wear. Check that the hoses are properly connected and not kinked or twisted.

- Ensure that the hose clamps are tight and not corroded.
- Check the hydraulic fluid level and color. If the fluid is discolored or smells burnt, it may indicate a problem with the hydraulic system.
- Always refer to the manufacturer's service manual to check if the components are connected properly.

By performing regular hose inspections, you can help ensure the safe and effective operation of your forklift and prevent costly repairs.

#6 Monthly Forklift Maintenance

In addition to daily checks and regular cleanings, don't forget to inspect and maintain these components on a monthly basis:

- **Battery:** check the battery for any signs of damage, corrosion, or leaking. Clean the battery terminals and add distilled water if necessary.
- **Cooling system:** check the coolant level and add more if necessary. Inspect the radiator and fan for any visible damage or debris buildup.
- **Drive train:** check the drive train for any signs of wear or damage, such as loose belts or cracked hoses.
- **Fuel system:** check the fuel filter and replace if necessary. Inspect the fuel lines for any signs of damage or leaks.
- **Steering system:** check the steering system for any signs of wear or damage, such as loose or worn steering components.

#7 Scheduled Maintenance

Finally, it is important to follow your forklift's manufacturer-recommended maintenance schedule. This may include periodic inspections, fluid changes, and other maintenance tasks.

This scheduled maintenance can help ensure that your forklift remains in good working condition and prevent costly repairs down the line.

While taking care of your forklift maintenance, you should always take care of your safety and the people in the workplace. That's why you should also check out these forklift safety rules by OSHA standards.

Forklift safety rules by [OSHA](#) standards

Some companies avoid following these rules can result in injuries, fatalities, and fines from regulatory agencies. According to OSHA, there are about 85 forklift fatalities and 34,900 serious injuries every year in the United States. A single violation can result in a fine exceeding \$10,000, and repeated violations can even reach over \$100,000.

Stick to the manufacturer's guidelines when using the vehicle.

It is important to follow the manufacturer's guidelines when using a forklift to ensure safe and proper operation. For example, using a forklift with a load capacity that exceeds the manufacturer's specifications can result in tipping or damage to the forklift.

Make sure to buckle up if there's a seatbelt on the forklift.

According to OSHA, seatbelt use can prevent operators from being thrown from the forklift during a tip-over, potentially saving their life. In fact, OSHA reports that 42% of forklift fatalities are caused by the operator being crushed or pinned by a tipping forklift.

Don't go over the weight limit, and always keep the load stable and balanced.

Going over the weight limit or not properly balancing the load can cause the forklift to tip over or the load to fall, potentially causing injury or damage. In fact, OSHA reports that 25% of forklift fatalities are caused by being struck by a falling object.

Avoid adjusting the load's height while on the move.

Adjusting the load's height while on the move can cause the forklift to become unstable and potentially tip over, causing injury or damage.

Maintain a safe gap from the edges of platforms and ramps.

Maintaining a safe gap from the edges of platforms and ramps can prevent the forklift from driving off the edge and potentially causing injury or damage.

Keep an eye out for other vehicles around your workspace.

Keeping an eye out for other vehicles can prevent collisions and accidents that could cause injury or damage. In fact, OSHA reports that 36% of forklift fatalities are caused by being struck or run over by a forklift.

Make sure you can see clearly and have enough room when lifting, loading, and operating the forklift.

Having clear visibility and enough room when lifting, loading, and operating the forklift can prevent collisions and accidents that could cause injury or damage.

When getting on the lift, use proper footing and grab the handhold if there's one.

Using proper footing and grabbing the handhold can prevent slips, trips, and falls that could cause injury.

Honk your horn at intersections and areas with limited visibility.

Honking your horn can alert others to your presence and prevent collisions and accidents that could cause injury or damage.

Be mindful of pedestrians and follow the speed limit.

Being mindful of pedestrians and following the speed limit can prevent collisions and accidents that could cause injury or damage.

Remember, no joyrides or using the forks to lift people.

Joyriding or using the forks to lift people is unsafe and can cause injury or damage. In fact, OSHA reports that 7% of forklift fatalities are caused by riding on the forklift.

Did you also know that there are almost 856,000 forklifts in the United States alone (2015 OSHA report), and 11% of them will be involved in some kind of accident? That's a pretty high percentage, and unfortunately, it can lead to some pretty serious consequences. In fact, each year, there are 85 forklift-related fatalities and almost 35,000 serious injuries. And out of those fatalities, 10% are caused by people being struck or run over by a forklift. So, both forklift operators and business owners must follow OSHA's forklift safety rules to prevent accidents and injuries, potentially saving lives and business reputation.

Conclusion

Regular forklift maintenance is essential for ensuring the safe and effective operation of your equipment.

You can help prevent costly repairs and prolong the service life of your forklift by performing regular cleanings, oil changes, daily checks, and scheduled maintenance,

It's also crucial to follow standard forklift safety rules to prevent accidents and protect workers.

Frequently asked questions about forklift maintenance

Why should I service a new forklift anyway?

Even if a forklift is brand new, it can still have defects or small issues that need to be addressed before they become major problems. Regular maintenance and inspections can catch and address these issues early on and prevent potential hazards.

Misaligned mast and loose bolts are common issues in new forklifts that, if left unchecked, could cause damage or accidents. Many manufacturers require regular maintenance to keep the warranty valid.

Just like with a car, regular servicing and maintenance will help to extend the forklift's life and keep it running at peak performance. Although it may seem counterintuitive to perform maintenance on a new machine, it is crucial to ensure its long-term reliability and performance.

What is standard forklift maintenance?

Standard forklift maintenance refers to the routine procedures and inspections that need to be carried out to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the forklift. It typically includes tasks such as regular cleaning, oil changes, checking fluid levels, inspecting tires and brakes, and addressing any necessary repairs. Following the manufacturer's guidelines and recommended maintenance schedule is crucial for standard forklift maintenance.

How often should a forklift be serviced?

The frequency of forklift servicing depends on various factors such as the type of forklift, usage intensity, and operating conditions. As a general guideline, forklifts should be serviced every 200 to 250 operating hours or approximately every three months. However, more frequent servicing may be required for heavy-duty or high-usage forklifts. Adhering to a regular servicing schedule helps identify potential issues, maintain optimal performance, and extend the service life of the forklift.

What is preventive maintenance of forklifts?

Preventive maintenance involves proactive measures taken to prevent breakdowns, malfunctions, and safety issues in forklifts. It focuses on regular inspections, cleaning, lubrication, and adjustment of components to prevent potential failures. By performing preventive maintenance tasks such as checking fluid levels, inspecting forks and mast components, and verifying safety features, operators can identify and address small issues

before they become major problems. This approach minimizes unscheduled downtime, reduces costly repairs, and ensures the safe operation of the forklift.

What should I check daily on a forklift?

Performing daily checks is essential for maintaining the safety and functionality of a forklift. Here are some key areas to check on a daily basis:

- **Fluid levels:** Check the hydraulic fluid, engine oil, coolant, and brake fluid levels to ensure they are within the recommended range.
- **Tires:** Inspect tire condition and pressure to ensure they are properly inflated and free from damage or excessive wear.
- **Brakes:** Test the brakes for responsiveness and ensure they are functioning properly.
- **Lights and signals:** Verify that headlights, taillights, turn signals, and audible warning devices are working correctly.
- **Forks and attachments:** Check for any signs of damage, wear, or misalignment in the forks and attachments.
- **Safety features:** Test seatbelts, horn, backup alarms, and other safety mechanisms to ensure they are operational.

Bonus Tip For Productivity Working With Forklifts

While paper and pen methods may have worked in the past, they simply can't keep up with the demands of modern businesses.

One major issue with using paper and pen methods is the potential for lost or misplaced information. This can lead to missed appointments, forgotten maintenance tasks, and ultimately, lost profits. In fact, according to a study by IDC, a market research firm, businesses lose an average of 20% to 30% of their revenue every year due to inefficiencies caused by manual processes.

With Frontu's [field service management](#) tool, you can eliminate these issues and streamline your operations. Our platform offers features like real-time scheduling, progress updates, digital checklists, and automated maintenance reminders, making it easier than ever to keep track of your field workers.

Additionally, using a field service management tool can help to improve your overall productivity and efficiency. According to a study by Aberdeen Group, companies that use a field service management tool see a 16% increase in their first-time fix rate and a 13% increase in service revenue.

Furthermore, Frontu's platform provides valuable insights into your operations, allowing you to identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions. For example, our reporting and analytics tools can help you identify trends in your maintenance needs and optimize your scheduling to reduce downtime and maximize productivity.

Be sure to check it out.

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7 Forklift Maintenance Tips for Safety and Efficiency

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"Discover top tips for forklift maintenance in our comprehensive guide. Prevent breakdowns, ensure safety, and save lots of wasted time with bonus tips. Check it out now!"