

Pallet Jack Safety

A pallet jack may not appear to be the most dangerous piece of equipment; however, there are numerous opportunities for personal injury or property damage. Simple procedures must be followed to avoid crushed toes, trip hazards, scraped knuckles and pulled backs.

Many of these same items below also apply to push carts, dollies or other manual material handling devices and should also be followed for those material handling devices.

Wear Personal Protective Equipment

Workers who work with pallet jacks need to wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including:

- Protective eye wear to prevent injuries from material strapping and hazardous chemicals being moved;
- Safety-toed footwear to prevent foot injuries caused by run over by the wheels, being hit by materials falling from the jack or stubbing a toe on the jack;
- Gloves to reduce the risk of cuts, bruises, blisters, smashed fingers and to protect hands in general.



Pallet Jack Maintenance

Keeping your pallet jack in good condition is imperative. Using a damaged or defective pallet jack can have serious consequences. For example, it can cause a load to shift and fall, resulting in injury. It's important to inspect pallet jacks before using them.

Look for cracks and other signs of defects or possible damage. Over time, the solid rubber wheels of pallet jacks may also develop wear, resulting in unstable loads and poor handling. In turn, workers can experience stress to the hands and arms because of difficulty steering and stopping the device.

Periodic maintenance of pallet jacks will enable workers to operate the devices with the minimum amount of hand, arm and finger force.

Safe Handling Guidelines

Using a pallet jack:

- Check the floor for ruts, bumps and other imperfections;
- Never place your feet under a pallet jack;
- If your view is obstructed, have a spotter assist;
- Never exceed a pallet jack's load capacity;
- Don't use a pallet jack for human transportation;
- When going down an incline, push, don't pull;
- Stick to correct traffic lanes and be alert to avoid collisions around corners;
- Avoid pinch point hazards; and
- Use proper lifting techniques when loading and unloading.

Proper Storage

When not in use, store pallet jacks where they will not create tripping hazards. Ensure that the devices do not block exits or emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers.

Pallet Jack Safety Procedures

- Do **NOT** operate a Pallet Jack (Manual or Electric) until trained and authorized.
- Always check the Pallet Jack (Manual or Electric) to see that it is in good working order before attempting to handle a load.
- Confirm load being lifted is within the capacity limit.
- Notify your supervisor about any faulty equipment immediately.
- Always inspect the load before attempting to move it. Determine that load is secured, evenly distributed and proper height to clear doorways.
- Limit load size. OSHA recommends limiting the necessary force to less than 50 pounds.
- When pulling loads, always be observant for any overhead obstructions.
- Ensure the jack is centered and straight in the pallet.
- Never attempt to lift a load with one fork.
- To prevent muscle strains use both hands to jack up a manual Pallet Jack.
- Obtain assistance when pulling heavy loads, pulling on wet floor, or on a grade.
- Swing wide on corners to avoid hitting objects.
- Use **Extra** caution when operating jack on a grade. Never turn sharp on a grade.
- Use wall of truck bed as a brake along with helper to keep heavy loads at a controlled speed.
- **Always** let the Jack down when the Jack is left unattended.
- Do not bump or hit walls causing damage when parking pallets.
- Make sure the Pallet Jack is at a complete stop and in down position before releasing handle.
- Keep all body parts (hands, arms, feet, etc) from getting underneath a pallet when it is in a raised position.
- Pallet Jacks are for work only. Horseplay, including riding the jacks, is strictly prohibited.

Additional precautions required for Electric Pallet jacks:

Powered pallet jacks are considered a powered industrial truck and as such there are additional requirements:

- Initial formal and practical training must be provided. Every three years operators must be recertified in training including evaluation of performance. Refresher training must be provided whenever operator deficiency is noted.
- Operators should inspect the powered pallet jack before use, checking all controls and verify brakes work.
- Operating the powered pallet jack is very similar to operating a forklift. Operators should position themselves for the best visibility. This usually means moving with the load trailing.
- Sound the horn at intersections and whenever necessary to let pedestrians or other equipment operators know that the pallet jack is coming.
- A powered pallet jack is a piece of equipment capable of lifting large amounts of weight and traveling at a fairly high rate of speed; treat it with the respect it deserves.
- Additional powered industrial truck requirements can be referenced within OSHA CFR 1910.178.