

July 2015



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Pallet jack safety



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**MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

## Pallet jack safety

The benefits of using electric pallet jacks far outweigh the risks if these material handling aids are used properly and safely. But, it is critical that anyone using an electric pallet jack be thoroughly trained. During an inspection, Cal OSHA will look for your training practices and documentation for use of an electric pallet jack. As a refresher, your Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) document key safety practices and procedures specific to your operation. The required elements in your IIPP are:

- ◆ Management commitment and statement of responsibilities
- ◆ A documented safety communications system with employees
- ◆ A system for assuring employees are compliant with the organizations' safe work practices
- ◆ Documentation of routine scheduled workplace inspections
- ◆ An accident investigation policy and documentation of those investigations
- ◆ Procedures for identifying and correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions
- ◆ Safety and health training and instruction (this is where your electric pallet jack training documentation should be displayed)
- ◆ Recordkeeping and documentation

Certainly proper maintenance and training are fundamental to the safe operation and use of an electric pallet jack, but as a rule they are very easy and safe to operate as long as operators follow certain guidelines such as:

- ◆ Prior to operating an electric pallet jack, always complete a pre-operation inspection. This will ensure you are using an electric power jack that is in sound mechanical condition. If the electric power jack does not pass your pre-operation inspection, don't use it. Instead, report the malfunctioning pallet jack to your supervisor immediately.
- ◆ Always be aware of your surroundings and be cautious of the wide swing of the electric power jack. Keep your body, especially your feet and ankles clear of the jack.



- ◆ When operating the electric pallet jack always face the direction of travel, do not walk backwards.
- ◆ Never operate an electric pallet jack on a ramp.
- ◆ The red button on the operation handle is an emergency reverse. This safety button will keep the electric pallet jack from running you over.
- ◆ A fully loaded electric pallet jack can weigh as much as a car. Never use your body to stop the electric pallet jack.

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- ◆ You cannot stop, push, or drag the electric pallet jack, even unloaded, without serious risk of injury.
- ◆ If a pallet is stuck on the forks of an electric pallet jack, there are only two ways it can be safely removed:
  1. Using the hydraulics on the control arm, move the forks up and down to loosen the pallet.
  2. If first option does not work, call a forklift driver over and have them place their forks in the side of the pallet and it will slide off of the electric pallet jack.

Please remember that pallet jacks should be used only by trained operators. Load capacities must be adhered to at all times, and every pallet jack (electric or manual) is shipped with an attached information plate that provides safe load limits. Pallet jacks are not industrial trucks and riding a pallet jack is never recommended. Anyone who is near a pallet jack must keep their feet clear of the implement and spotters should accompany the operator in areas where the view is obstructed.

A few distinctions between manual and electric pallet jacks:

**Manual pallet jacks** depend on the use of human force to operate them. This includes loading the jack properly, which is a critical safety aspect. In this case, the pallet being loaded should be the correct size for the forks of the jack being used. If the pallet is too wide or too long, the load on the pallet will be unstable during transport and will likely tip or slip off the pallet. Additionally, the load limitations for the jack must never be exceeded in order to avoid losing control over the load while it is being moved. Move at a safe and steady rate of speed. A manual jack can be moved either by pulling or pushing the load, but it is recommended that pushing is a safer technique when moving loads around corners or in areas where limited maneuvering room is available.

**Powered pallet jacks** are pallet jacks that use electricity to lift and move their loads. They are great labor-saving devices that are used widely in many industries. As with manual pallet jacks, careful loading is required. Because the pallet jack is powered, gradual starts and stops are recommended during operation to avoid load slippage.

Moving through narrow aisles and going up and down inclined surfaces present challenges and require careful attention during operation. When using an elevator to transport a load, the pallet jack should proceed the operator into the elevator rather than backing in. If trucks are being loaded using an electric pallet jack, they must be blocked (chocked) to keep the vehicle from moving during loading.

Electric pallet jacks help reduce work related injuries by keeping employees from lifting heavy loads. They make operations more productive, however improper use can create costly problems. When electric pallet jacks have been the source of accidents in the workplace, it is usually because workers are not trained properly on how to use them and not being trained on safe operation of the electric jack could injure themselves and other employees.

Make certain your supervisors are aware of the hazards involved in the operation of this type of equipment. Write instructions on proper operation and train all operators accordingly. When training operators, supervisors must ensure the operator has learned by having them work the powered pallet jack in the presence of the instructor.

Make sure you know the capacity of the powered pallet jack before using it. The load capacity should be made available on the pallet jack. Lift rating capacity varies according to the make and model of the electric pallet jack. Never attempt to lift a load that is over the lift capacity of the jack. Forks of different lengths are available, always consider the size and weight of the load to determine if you have the proper fork length installed.

Operate this useful tool safely and it will improve your productivity and reduce your work related injuries. Operate it carelessly and it will cost your organization more than you might expect.

*"A manual jack can be moved either by pulling or pushing the load, but it is recommended that pushing is a safer technique when moving loads around corners or in areas where limited maneuvering room is available".*

One video is worth 10,000 words. The Raymond Corporation is the premier manufacturer of pallet jacks. They also provide training resources. This link leads you to a video that demonstrates the proper use of electric pallet jacks.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=ws7upsu7cik&list=PLDDCE927012186E4B](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=ws7upsu7cik&list=PLDDCE927012186E4B)

## ELECTRIC PALLET JACK SAFETY AND OPERATING CHECKS (PRIOR TO EACH USE)

Inspection guides should be available for every electric pallet jack identifying it by equipment number, department, make and model. If defects are found, report them to your supervisor and have a qualified mechanic correct them. At minimum the inspection should include:

Motor Off Checks	OK	If Not OK, Maintenance Required
Fluid leaks on floor below Truck – Hydraulic Oil, Battery		
Tires – Condition /Pressure		
Forks, -- Condition		
Hand Guards – Attached		
Safety Warnings – Attached (Refer to Parts Manual for Location)		
Operator's Manual in Container		
Load Capacity Plate Attached – Information Matches Model, Serial Number		
Motor On Checks (Unusual Noises Must Be Investigated Immediately)	OK	If Not OK, Maintenance Required
Service Brake – Functioning Smoothly		
Steering Operation – Functioning Smoothly		
Drive Control – Forward/Reverse – Functioning Smoothly		
Hoist and Lowering Control – Functioning Smoothly		
Horn – Functioning at required volume		
Lights & Alarms – Functioning		
Hour Meter – Functioning		
Battery Discharge Indicator – Functioning		



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MANUFACTURERS  
& TECHNOLOGY  
ASSOCIATION



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**PUBLISHED BY**

California Manufacturers &  
Technology Association  
1115 Eleventh Street  
Sacramento, CA  
95814-3819

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cmtasource.php](http://www.cmta.net/page/cmtasource.php)

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