



Safety Scene

Understanding the OSHA Powered Industrial Truck (Forklift) Standard

by Molly E. Butz

Learning to comply with OSHA's forklift training requirements.

It's highly likely that as a component manufacturer, you are using one or more powered industrial trucks (PIT) at your facility. More commonly referred to as forklifts, it's important to know that the OSHA standard for PIT training applies to all industries where forklifts are being used, including component manufacturing. Unfortunately, as are many federal standards, the PIT standard is often misunderstood.

A PIT?

A thorough understanding of the standard begins with defining what constitutes a PIT. OSHA describes a PIT as "any mobile, power-propelled truck used to carry, push, pull, lift, stack or tier materials" that can "be ridden or controlled by a walking operator." Remember, this does include powered hand trucks so any employees using those types of equipment need to be trained as well. Visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/powerindustrialtrucks/standards.html to view OSHA's standard and a listing of additional federal standards.



Truck-Related Topics:

- Operating instructions, warnings, and precautions
- Differences between PITs and automobiles
- Truck controls and instrumentation
- Engine/motor operation
- Steering and maneuvering
- Visibility
- Fork and attachment adaptation, operation, and use limitations
- Vehicle capacity
- Vehicle stability
- Inspection and maintenance
- Refueling/recharging
- Operating limitations

Workplace-Related Topics:

- Surface conditions
- Composition of loads
- Load manipulation
- Pedestrian traffic
- Hazardous locations/environment
- Ramps and sloped surfaces

at a glance

- ❑ OSHA defines a powered industrial truck (PIT) as any mobile, power-propelled truck used to carry, push, pull, lift, stack or tier materials that can be ridden or controlled by a walking operator.
- ❑ OSHA requires you to implement a PIT vehicle training program and verify that each operator has been properly trained and evaluated.

What to Teach?

Once you have identified the employees that will be operating the PITs in your facility (this should incorporate part-time operators as well), you can begin the training process. OSHA requires you, the employer, to develop and implement a training program "based on the general principles of safe truck operation, the types of vehicle(s) being used in the workplace, the hazards of the workplace created by the use of the vehicle(s)," and the general safety requirements of the standard. Both formal, (classroom/presentation) and practical (demonstrations/hands-on) training have to be provided and you will also need to certify that each operator has been properly trained and evaluated. (This doesn't necessarily mean a test, just some method of evaluation.)

Continued on page 20

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Safety Scene

Continued from page 18

There are numerous critical topics your training program will need to cover (see inset on page 18). You also need to note that your operators must be trained for each type of PIT they will be asked to use. Moreover, the training you provide needs to address the unique characteristics associated with each type of vehicle. In addition, simply showing your employees a presentation on the various aspects of PIT safety does not meet the full requirements of the standard; you must also present information about hazards and environments that are specific to your facility.

Who Should Teach?

That brings us to the training process. One of the most common misconceptions about the requirements of the federal PIT training program is that in order to be a qualified trainer a person must be certified by OSHA. This isn't necessarily the case. The standard simply states that the PIT operator training and evaluation process "shall be conducted by persons who have the knowledge, training, and experience to train powered industrial truck operators and evaluate their competence." In some cases, this may be a person that has been trained by an outside resource and earned a trainer certification, in others, it may be someone who has been working in your facility for a long time and has demonstrated the knowledge and ability to be a skilled PIT operator and trainer.

Certification & Recordkeeping

Another common myth is that PIT operators must be "licensed." In actuality, once your employee training is complete and you have evaluated your drivers (and they pass), they are considered certified. Unless you'd like, no pomp

and circumstance is necessary as long as you're keeping good records. On the other hand, companies often choose to offer a certified operator card and/or certificate to their employees as proof of their training and evaluation.

Your recordkeeping will be the key to your program. These are the most important things to remember:

- A written PIT certification record must include the name of the PIT operator, date of training, date of evaluation and identity of the person(s) performing the training/evaluation.
- Each time you certify a new PIT operator, update your Annual PIT Operator Status Report.
- An evaluation of each PIT operator's performance needs to be conducted at least once every three years.
- You must retain the most recent certification record for each of your PIT operators, which will be three years in most cases.

Refresher Training

Occasionally, refresher training may need to be conducted. Any of the following circumstances require refresher training, including an evaluation:

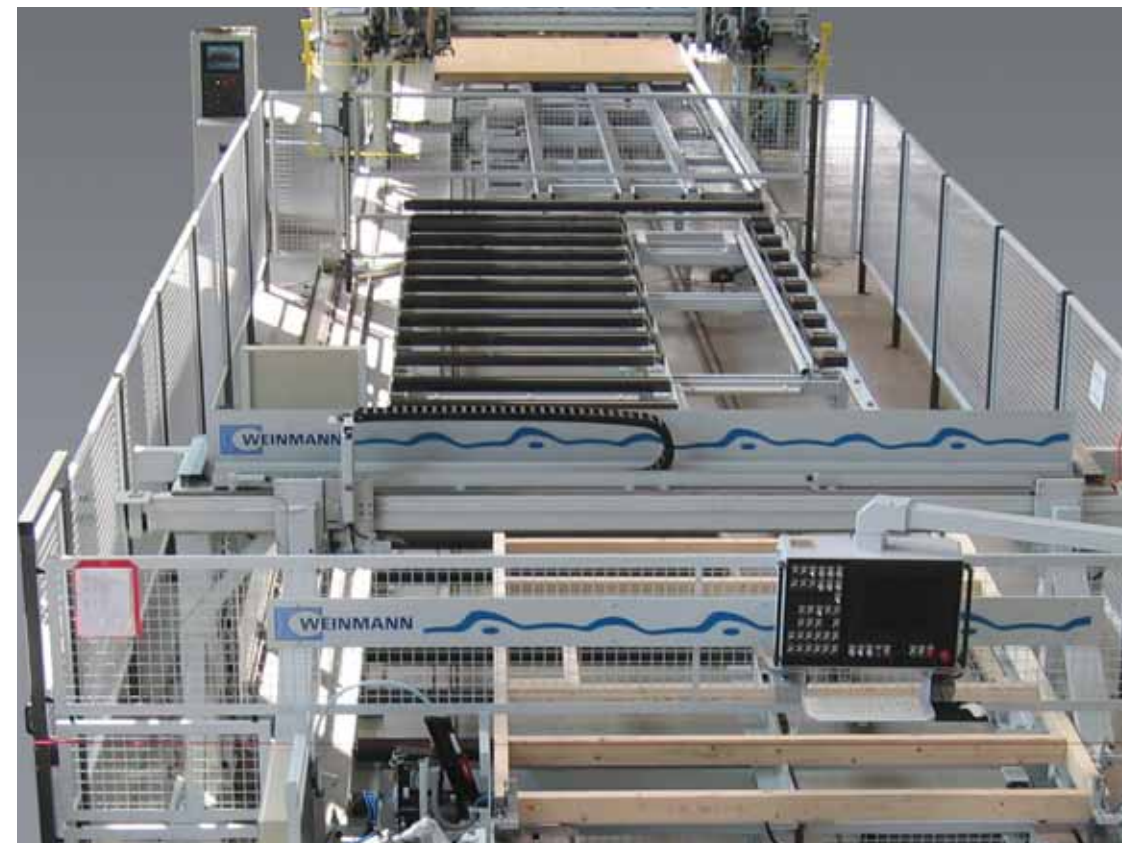
- The operator has been observed operating the vehicle in an unsafe manner.
- The operator has been involved in an accident or near-miss incident.
- The operator has received an evaluation that reveals that the operator is not operating the PIT safely.
- The operator is assigned to drive a different type of PIT.
- A condition in the workplace changes in a manner that could affect safe operation of the PIT.

Not only is PIT training a federal requirement, it's also really crucial to the safety and well-being of your employees. It is estimated that PITs cause approximately 100 fatalities and more than 36,000 serious injuries annually, often because of inadequate training. Keeping your operators certified can prevent your company from becoming a statistic! Safety first! **SBC**

If you're looking for a comprehensive PIT safety program that is specific to the structural building components industry, consider WTCA's Forklift Certification Program. This dynamic training program integrates online training with hands-on exercises to provide a diversified course for your forklift operators. For new or experienced forklift operators, this program will help you train, evaluate and monitor your forklift operations all year long. For more information or to order, visit www.wtcalco.com/training/safety/forklift.php.

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