

Forklift Purchasing Guide



from the team at [Purchasing.com](https://www.purchasing.com)

Introduction to the Forklift Buying Process

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Finding the right forklift for your business requires specialized insight if you hope to find the most productive, cost-effective machine. In addition to the power source, you'll be evaluating a variety of factors that impact your long-term cost, including how much and how high the machine can lift, how careful you need to be when manipulating the load in sensitive areas, and whether you should buy new or used.

With the variety of technological enhancements and new ergonomic designs available, even the smallest adjustment can save your operators time, simultaneously boosting their productivity and the cost-effectiveness of your operation. To find the lift that's best suited to your business needs, you can sift through the countless offerings available on the web. Or you can simply consult a reputable dealer.

Unlike a piece of machinery purchased over the Internet, professional forklift dealers specialize in pairing industries with the appropriate machinery – easily matching your business process with a machine that meets and often exceeds your requirements.

Three essential criteria

When purchasing a forklift, many buyers only take service labor rates into account, believing the lower they are they better. And while this is true, it's only one small component of a large purchase decision. Unfortunately, it doesn't provide an accurate representation of what you're really after: lowest cost of ownership.

Routine service and maintenance are crucial to the long-term performance and ROI of a forklift. As a result, the support of a quality dealer is at the top of the list when evaluating machines – in particular the labor frequency of consumption and system support. Start by evaluating a dealer's maintenance and post-sale support by considering:

1. Number and availability of professional service technicians
2. Accessibility of name-brand parts (both on-hand and delivered)
3. First-call fix rate and turnaround time

By factoring in the cost of time associated with the above items, you look past low service rates and achieve an accurate estimate related to the cost of your downtime and maintenance requirements.

Benefits of a service level agreement (SLA)

From time and material to fees associated with planned maintenance, a service level agreement provides a range of specific benefits that can save you thousands over the life cycle of your forklift. By locking in the rate and specific aspects of service, you can reliably budget for the maintenance of a single lift, or an entire fleet, years in advance.

When evaluating a dealer's SLA, be on the lookout for the following points:

- Local dealer support – Technicians are ideally within 50 miles of your location.
- Availability of name-brand parts – Give preference to those with the highest off-shelf rate.
- Service programs – Establish frequency and associated costs for time and material, planned maintenance (basic), full maintenance (including all operating systems), and complete maintenance (comprehensive service from the tip of the forks to the taillights).
- Warranty on parts and service – A guarantee for quality and professional installation.
- Customer support and responsiveness – This provides a 24/7 support line for after-hours issues and assistance.
- Operator training and certification – Quality dealers offer classes and certification at their facility and (in some instances) on-site at your location.

Easy expansion

As your business grows, expanding your machinery is quick and simple with dealer support. Delivering the same make and model as the other machines in your fleet, a solid relationship with a quality forklift dealer helps minimize costs by reducing the need for additional operator training and certifications. It also

enables you to schedule planned maintenance on multiple machines of the same variety, knowing exactly what to expect across your entire fleet.

Before comparing dealers, take a quick look through this forklift purchasing guide. Pay particular attention to trends, types, specs, and attachments. We've even compiled a list of questions to make sure you find the best dealer, machinery, and post-sale support.

Trends

Forklifts are a major purchase by any standard, ranging in cost from \$20,000 to \$100,000 (and more) for a new machine. So when comparing forklifts and their dealers, it's critical to get a machine that meets your needs and includes as many modern technological enhancements as possible to ensure it remains up-to-date, keeping pace with operator experience, training, and certification.

Among the major trends in forklift technology is the inclusion of fuel cells as a power source. Slowly phasing out diesel and battery-powered options, fuel cells are billed as being able to deliver higher levels of productivity, lower cost of ownership, and reduced emissions.



Fuel cell technology is an environmentally-friendly way to cut some of the costs associated with labor while all but eliminating the restrictions found in their exhaust-emitting counterparts. Shown to operate for longer periods of time than battery-powered models and require less maintenance than those with combustion engines, forklifts powered by fuel cells use an onsite hydrogen refuelling station that requires only a few minutes to reach full capacity. This is in comparison to a minimum of 30 minutes required to recharge a standard forklift battery. Plus, the simple connection (480 VAC 3 Phase, 100 amps) eliminates the need for battery storage as well as the equipment necessary for a charging station, opening up additional warehouse space for added product or storage.

Increasingly integrated into a wide range of industrial equipment, fuel cells boost power density by distributing reactants internally within the fuel cell, using a combination of hydrogen fuel and oxygen to generate electricity. Most fuel cells currently produce a minimal amount of electricity (1 volt is a common

example). For this reason, they are assembled into a “fuel cell stack,” producing standard configurations that offer power ratings from 10 to 30 kW.

In addition to the safety and cost-effectiveness associated with their operation, fuel cells offer additional benefits that include:

- Repairable and recyclable – Unlike other power sources, some fuel cells are designed to be fully repairable, easily replacing one or more cells within a stack and rebuilding the core electrochemical components. This not only reduces consumption and resulting waste, it also saves substantial costs associated with the purchase of a new stack. If the fuel stack needs to be replaced, the metal catalyst can be recovered and receives credit when recycled.
- Scalable – Not every process requires the same level of output. So fuel cells have been engineered with a modular design that enables them to be “turned down,” curtailing the hydrogen supply from 25 to 250 kg per day, customizing the cost-effectiveness of operation.
- Long lasting – The life cycle of an industrial grade fuel cell is reportedly in the 5 to 10-year range. This is in comparison to a standard forklift battery that has an estimated lifespan of 5 years (1,500 cycles) max when charged once a day (300 charges per year). Opportunity charging has been shown to further reduce the longevity of electrical power sources by more than half their expected life cycle, making the fuel cell even more attractive as it was designed for exactly this type of refueling, easily recharged during shift changes and meal periods.

But fuel cell technology is not without cost. Though on the rise, it's still in its infancy. And like many new technologies, it has areas that need to be developed in order for it to become cost effective for smaller operations. According to another recent study, fuel cells may currently be most “viable at materials handling facilities that [have] extraordinary costs of facility space, labor, and electricity.”

New vs. Used

Another major consideration many buyers face when comparing forklifts is whether to buy a new or used machine. In fact, for some business owners, it isn't a decision at all but rather the only option available. Regardless of the situation, you can find an excellent used forklift by paying close attention to guidelines associated with the following criteria:

Age

Though far from the most critical consideration, the age of the machine is one of the first things to consider. Usually imprinted within the serial number or

stamped on or near the mast, the year the machine was manufactured may also be reflected in the series (as is common with Toyota).

If you're buying within the current year, expect to pay 100% of the book value. But if you're trying to save money, look for a machine that's at least five years old and give more weight to the factors listed below.

Service hours

This is actually a compilation of a couple different types of use: key hours and dead man hours, both of which are metered on electric lift trucks. Key hours are the time during which the key was turned on. Representing the motor's running time, key hours may not be an accurate portrait of the machine's use as many of the components are not in use when the machine is idle.

Instead, look at the dead man hours. This meter is activated when the operator is standing on the dead man pedal, indicating that the machine is actually being used. When purchasing a used machine, those with part-time use (or less) are best.

- **BUYING TIP:** A 5-year-old machine with 12,000 hours on it (representing 8 hours a day, 5 days a week for 5 years) would be considered heavy use. With that in mind, 6,000 hours or less would be preferable for a machine of this age.

History

You'll find an enormous difference between a forklift that was used for basic warehouse stocking and one that operated within the construction trades or extreme operating environments. Similar to an automobile, clean, controlled environments result in a lower level of wear and tear. So pay close attention to both its function at its current location and what type of conditions are involved, including:

- Potential for airborne particles or other contaminants in the work environment (i.e. meat packing or food processing)?
- Environmental temperature (humid, freezing)?
- Air quality (used on a dock or close to salt water)?
- Inside or outside use?

Condition

This is where it's best to have either the support of a professional dealer (in the form of a warranty or similar purchase guarantee) or the assistance of a qualified forklift mechanic. A few of the most important aspects related to the condition of a forklift include:

- Mast operation: Operation should be smooth and free of binding or slippage, with or without a load.
- Tires: Similar to a car or truck, uneven or excessive wear on the tires can indicate a problem related to axle alignment and will most likely result in some costly repairs down the line.
- Engine: Exhaust (if diesel) should be minimal on startup and dissipate when the machine warms up. Blue smoke indicates leaks in the system (often around the piston rings). Also check for leaks along the mast and tire cylinders, transmission, differential, and radiator after the lift has had time to warm up. If you or your forklift mechanic discover leaks in any of these areas, it's probably best to keep looking.

Types

You may be able to save money on a forklift by matching your intended use to a machine. This can prevent over-buying on sizes and features you don't need. With that in mind, there are four primary types of forklifts you should consider:

1. Order pickers
2. Pallet jacks
3. Reach trucks
4. Sit-down rider trucks

Here's a quick rundown on their primary capabilities, and what you can expect to pay for each.

1. Order pickers

Common in warehouse and retail environments, order pickers enable an operator to reach stocked items in racking or on shelves between 8 and 11 feet in the air. Used almost exclusively indoors or on exterior surfaces with smooth cement paving, they're available in two different types: all electronic or electronic lift only.

All electronic lifts allow the operator to move and reposition the lift through controls on the platform, simplifying operation and saving considerable time when picking orders with multiple components. Electronic lift only models feature controls just for vertical movement and require the manual repositioning of the order picker for each new item.

Capacities range from 400 to 700 lbs. (though a few support up to 3,500 lbs.), and they're also available in multiple platform sizes, with 23-inch and 25-inch models popular for their slim profile and single-person operation.

Designed for lighter loads and indoor use, order pickers are battery powered and often come with a battery and built-in charger.

- Price range: Expect to pay anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000, with a number of quality models falling in the \$5,000 to \$6,000 range.

2. Pallet jacks

Also known as pump trucks or hand trucks, pallet jacks have become one of the most essential tools in a warehouse or retail environment. They enable an individual to move an entire pallet of goods while either unloading a truck or shifting a load on ground level to another location within the facility. Because they are not ride-along units and do not provide vertical elevation, they do not require extensive training for use or an operator's license, making them both popular and cost-effective for workforces in the settings previously mentioned. Plus, they come in a variety of configurations, tailored to a range of diverse applications. These customizations can include:



- Standard or Euro pallet compliance
- Low profile
- Foldable
- All-terrain
- Wide or narrow fork spread
- Long or short forks

In general, there are two main types of pallet jacks, electric and manual, most of which support between 3,000 to 4,000 lbs. Manual is among the most common, in part because these lifts are the easiest to use and also the least expensive. When the handle is “pumped,” the forks lift the load a few inches off the ground – just enough for travel – and the operator pushes the load to its new location.

Electric models achieve the same effect but with a lot less sweat. They’re operated by fingertip controls on the handle, preventing the operator from having to manually pump the forks off the floor or push the load from one location to another. They feature an electric motor that allows the operator to select forward or reverse and raise or lower the forks when desired. Battery-powered, electric hand trucks have an integral charger that enables them to be plugged straight into the mains without requiring a stand-alone charging unit. Extra bells and whistles include optional rider kit platforms, extended

forks that allow the movement of two pallets at a time, and scales to monitor the weight of the load.

- Price range: Expect to pay \$250 to \$700 for a manual hand truck and \$2,800 to \$11,000 for an electric model.

3. Reach trucks

Predominately designed for warehouses and similar indoor lift applications, reach trucks are able to pull items from racking by “reaching” in with an extendable carriage and forks. Single-reach trucks extend the distance of one pallet and double-reach models extend the distance of two.

Unlike an order picker that offers minimal weight support, reach trucks provide the ability to move entire pallets with weight capacities that range from 2,500 to 5,500 lbs. Outrigger legs on the front of the machine support the weight of the load up to heights of more than 30 feet. This is still far less weight than a sit-down, counterbalanced machine can support but often quite adequate for many indoor applications, especially in situations where diesel exhaust or the cost of fuel are prohibitive.

In addition to weight limitations, low undercarriage clearance and electric power systems are two more reasons reach trucks are largely used indoors. When operated in external environments, curbs and uneven work surfaces wreak havoc on the undercarriage and even tip the unit in extreme circumstances. Plus, some units have been known to suffer contact trouble due to the shaking that results from rough terrain.

Reach trucks are designed with two different types of operator platforms, one that includes a tilting cab function, leaning the operator into a better (and more comfortable) position during operation. The other design makes use of a see-through overhead guard, often constructed from reinforced steel bars that prevent falling items from hitting the operator while providing a clear view of the forks and load overhead. Add-ons and upgrades include cameras that can be mounted on the fork carriage, enabling the operator to clearly see the load on an LCD screen.

- Price range: Expect to pay between \$19,000 to \$30,000 for a new reach truck and \$1,500 to \$8,000 for a used model.

4. Sit-down counterbalance forklift trucks

Considered the most common type of forklift truck overall, counterbalanced models provide the highest capacity, both in terms of height and weight. For this reason, they’re used for everything from warehouse applications to construction and in some of the most unforgiving environments on Earth.

Designed with a weight installed into the rear of the truck's body, this counterbalance is what offsets the load in front. Weight capacities typically range from 3,000 to 80,000 lbs. and can go as high as 120,000 lbs. Most models offer lift heights between 10 to 15 feet, but some can lift as high as 36 feet. When comparing models, it's a good idea to have a firm understanding of the weight and size of your average load. Capacity for a sit-down unit is usually based on a 24-inch "load center," meaning the distance from the center of the load to the vertical part of the forks should be no more than 24 inches to ensure safe lifting and transport.

Powered by an internal combustion engine, sit-down lift trucks run on a variety of fuels including gasoline, diesel fuel, liquid propane gas (LPG), or compressed natural gas (CNG). Unlike electric models that require extended recharge times, IC forklifts can be refueled on the fly simply by filling them up at a gas pump or loading a new LPG canister.

The sit-down models are also available in two different types: 4-wheel and 3-wheel. The 4-wheel models encompass all of the features mentioned above and represent the most robust lift trucks on the market. However, the 3-wheel variety combines the electric power of a reach truck with the convenience of sit-down operation, enabling these machines to be used indoors. They can also be used for longer periods of time as the design helps to prevent operator fatigue. The forklift battery acts as a counterbalance weight and enables the lifting and transportation of loads weighing between 3,000 and 5,000 lbs.

- Price range: Expect to pay \$20,000 to \$25,000 for an electric model plus \$2,800 to \$5,000 for one battery and a charger. IC models also start around \$20,000 (new) but can easily cost \$50,000 to \$90,000 and well over \$100,000 depending on the type and capacity it supports. Used lift trucks can be found in the \$7,000 to \$40,000 range, with a number of models available for about \$18,000.

Forklift Pricing Summary

Type	New	Used
Order Pickers	\$5,000 - \$10,000	\$3,000 - \$6,000
Pallet Jacks (Manual)	\$200 - \$700	\$80 - \$250
Pallet Jacks (Electric)	\$2,800 - \$11,000	\$1,900 - \$6,000
Reach Trucks	\$19,000 - \$30,000	\$1,500 - \$8,000

Sit-Down Counterbalance Forklift Trucks (IC)	\$20,000 - \$100,000	\$7,000 - \$40,000
Sit-Down Counterbalance Forklift Trucks (Electric)	\$20,000 - \$50,000	\$8,900 - \$24,000

Specs

When comparing forklifts, there are a number of critical specs that can help eliminate models not up to the task. The first and most important consideration is the power source. The two primary options are:

1. Electric, powered solely by an on-board battery
2. Internal combustion (IC), powered by a traditional engine that runs on one of several types of fuel

Electric

Powered by large, heavy lead-acid batteries, electric lifts typically provide enough power for one standard eight-hour shift or about 5 to 6 hours of continuous use. The two biggest advantages to this system are that it produces zero emissions, a necessity if the lift is operated indoors, and is highly economical in terms of fuel.

In fact, costing only 10% to 15% of an IC lift, electric models offer a substantially lower cost per hour-of-operation than any of the internal combustion lifts. That said, electric forklifts have a higher upfront cost in comparison to combustion models – as much as 20% to 40% more. Depending on the efficiency of the charger you use and the cost of electricity in your area, a standard industrial battery can be recharged for about \$3 per charge.

Internal combustion

Internal combustion engines run on a variety of fuels including gasoline, diesel fuel, liquid propane gas (LPG), or compressed natural gas (CNG). The main benefits of an IC forklift are the ability to operate them in any environment, a far greater capacity for weight (120,000 lbs. for diesel vs. 12,000 lbs. for an electric), and the ability to be refueled on the fly. They also have a slightly higher reach, usually capping out around 36 feet in comparison to electric lifts that typically don't go higher than 30 feet.

Their upfront price is the inverse of electric, making them initially cheaper than electric models, but they cost more per hour to run. In fact, you can plan on paying about \$30 to fill a 7-gallon diesel tank and \$25 to \$35 to fill a 33-lb propane tank. If you refuel the tanks twice a day (the average for full-time

use), this equates to a yearly fuel cost of \$1,500 for electric, \$15,000 for diesel, and about \$12,500 for propane.

Dual fuel – a happy median

With the cost of diesel rising, dual fuel engines are becoming the preferred engine type for forklifts and similar industrial equipment in the United States. Comparable in terms of output to single-power options, they provide the cost-saving ability to combine gas and liquid propane or diesel and electric operation, switching between the two modes when power needs change.

In addition to the cost-saving benefits achieved through fuel conservation, dual fuel systems do not require spark plugs or an ignition system, eliminating a good chunk of the maintenance associated with traditional IC engines and boosting overall ROI.

Tires

Tires are another primary consideration and will largely be determined by your operating environment: indoors or outdoors, paved surfaces or rough terrain. There are three different types to choose from:

1. Pneumatic
2. Cushion
3. Polyurethane

Pneumatic tires (solid/air)

Designed for heavy-duty lifting and outdoor operation, a gasoline or diesel lift truck with pneumatic tires has the same functionality as a standard car or truck. The tires are longer and wider than cushion tires, made of solid rubber, and are either solid or filled with air.

This solid design makes them extremely durable. They won't pop, puncture or go flat which is why they're used for a variety of heavy-duty applications, including construction zones, lumber yards, recycling centers, and similar locations that may have metal shards, nails, and other potentially damaging items in the work environment. This indestructibility also makes them more expensive than air pneumatic tires, and justifiably so.

Air pneumatics work well outdoors on asphalt, gravel, and even unpaved terrain, but similar to a car or bike tire, they can be punctured.

Cushion tires

Constructed from solid rubber, cushion tires are pressed directly onto the

wheel and feature a smaller chassis, sitting lower to the ground than pneumatic tires. This position gives them a big advantage in terms of maneuverability by enabling a smaller turn radius. Unfortunately, the low ground clearance largely relegates them to indoor use as the lift may get hung up on curbs, uneven pavement, and other obstacles outside.

It's worth noting that forklifts equipped with cushion tires are often less expensive and more readily available, both new and used, than pneumatic forklifts.

Polyurethane tires

Easy to install, polyurethane tires are designed to be pressed onto the wheels of a forklift and feature a low rolling resistance that has been shown to prolong their lifespan. Popular for the excellent traction they provide, they do come with one downside: they can only be used indoors. Polyurethane tires are incompatible with outdoor terrain and are therefore only installed on electric lifts that are used on smooth interior pavements and loading pads.

Attachments

Get the most out of your lift by pairing it with the right attachments. Forklift accessories help lower the total cost of ownership by enabling a single machine to perform multiple tasks. Plus, many quality accessories are designed with a quick coupler, enabling operators to easily transition from one aspect of a job to the next.

Some of the most popular forklift equipment and attachments include:

- Boom / telescopic boom – Use a forklift in place of a crane on many jobs by slipping the forks of your counter-balanced lift truck into the pockets of a jib boom. Secured through a 36-inch safety chain attached to the truck mast, standard lengths when extended range between 12 to 15 feet and are around 7 feet when retracted. Cost is largely dictated by weight capacity, supporting up to 6,000 lbs. in most cases, and ranges between \$600 and \$2,400.
- Fork extension – As the name implies, fork extensions enable you take a bigger bite and carry more in a single load. Available in lengths from 48 to 96 inches, they are usually available in yellow or black and come in fork widths of 4 to 6 inches. Expect to pay between \$350 and \$980.
- Hook plate – Constructed from heavy duty steel, hook plates maximize safety when lifting heavy loads with a chain, cable, or rope. A safety chain and secure clasp ties the hook plate to your forklift to prevent it from sliding off the forks. Upper range for weight capacity is around 4,000 to 6,000 lbs. Plan on paying between \$200 and \$600.

- Lifting beam – Similar to a hook plate, a lifting beam provides a higher degree of safety when lifting or transporting loads that have chains, cables, and ropes. Available as single fixed, double fixed, single swivel, and double swivel, their design enables them to support loads from 4,000 to 30,000 lbs. Cost runs between \$400 and \$3,000.
- Drum snatcher – Drum handling equipment allows for the quick and safe transportation of 30- or 55-gallon drums without the use of a pallet. They are engineered individually to accommodate plastic, steel, or fiber drums and can take weights between 800 and 1,500 lbs. Cost ranges between \$500 and \$1,500.
- Side-shifter – This add-on enables the operator to adjust loads left and right with the push of a button. Particularly useful in tight spaces, sideshifters quickly shift pallets and other loads on racking or at ground level without requiring the driver to reposition the truck. They're available as either Class II or Class III mounts, support weights between 5,500 to 10,000 lbs., and cost \$500 to \$800.
- Rotator – Ideal for dumping refuse bins or large crates that have to be upended or inverted for emptying, rotators operate through hydraulic function and enable 360° revolving motion in either direction. Supported weight capacities are between 3,000 to 40,000 lbs., with the higher range (11,000 to 40,000 lbs.) reserved for models with extended load centers. Expect to pay \$800 to \$15,000 depending on capacity.
- Fork positioner – Ideal for warehouse operations or similar environments that routinely deal with a variety of pallet sizes, fork positioners enable the operator to slide the forks in or out to accurately fit different pallet openings. Shown to reduce damage to pallets while increasing productivity, fork positioners are available in mounting Classes II, III, and IV and accommodate fork carriers from 3 to 7 inches wide. Weight capacities range from 5,500 to 15,000 lbs., with costs that start around \$1,000 and can easily go well past \$3,000.
- Roll and barrel clamp – Another option for palletless handling, roll and barrel clamps enable the operator to pick up and transport large rolls of newsprint and similar printing stocks as well as other cylindrical-shaped items within mills and warehouses. Quality tools feature “roll damage reduction” to ensure items arrive without dents, tears, or creases and come with a variety of different pads depending on the medium transported, including rubber, ribbed cast, bonded urethane, and flexipad. Costs range from \$1,000 to \$15,000.
- Pole attachments – Primarily designed for the transport of carpet or textiles, pole attachments are constructed from high strength stainless steel and are typically between 2-3/4 to 5 inches in diameter. Available in Class II or III mounts, they feature spring-loaded locking pins that provide secure installation. Expect to pay \$400 to \$675.

- Man basket – This upgrade turns a forklift into an aerial lift vehicle, hoisting one or two individuals and equipment to the lift's max height. Man baskets support weights between 600 to 1,000 lbs. and can accommodate additional upgrades that include safety harnesses, tool trays, and fluorescent tube bulb caddies. Expect to pay anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,600 for the basket itself and \$100 to \$200 for the upgrades mentioned.

NOTE: Though some accessories may be "OSHA approved," you may be required to contact the manufacturer of your forklift to receive written authorization for the use of any third-party fork truck attachments. Ask your dealer for more information.

Questions to Ask a Dealer

Buying a forklift is a two-prong purchase decision: choosing the lift itself and choosing a forklift dealer. Believe it or not, the latter decision is equally important (if not more so) than picking out the actual machine. The forklift dealer you select will be responsible for providing the service and support that keep your lift running smoothly and reduce its operating cost over time.

When evaluating forklift dealers, it's a good idea to compare a number of potential candidates to find one who's reputable, stable, and can deliver top-notch service in line with your specific needs and particular industry.

Similar to interviewing any other employee or business associate, there are a number of important questions to ask that can help eliminate dealers who may not be compatible with your needs. Some of these questions include:

1. How long have you been in business?
2. What level of inventory do you keep on-site for parts replacement? And how fast is your average turnaround for parts that have to be delivered?
3. How many certified forklift mechanics do you have?
4. How many machines have you sold in the last year? How many similar to the one I'm interested in?
5. Do you provide on-site service?
6. What are your service hours?
7. Do you have guaranteed response times?
8. What brand or brands do you specialize in? Why did you select this particular brand?
9. What kind of insurance do you carry? (Note: If they don't have worker's comp and one of their mechanics gets hurt while repairing a forklift at your facility, the claim could fall under your insurance.)

Forklift training & safety

According to professional dealers, those who invest in the least amount of forklift operator training end up paying the most in the long-run – both in terms of operating costs and accidents. So the provision of operator training is a big plus and should factor heavily into your decision when included with purchase or an SLA.

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has very specific rules about forklift operator training and licensing. Those who operate powered industrial trucks must pass classroom training and a driving test before being licensed. They must also be over 18 years old and are required to be evaluated and re-certified at least once every three years.

[Art Merino, Found and CEO of Forklift Academy](#) cites two main reasons for forklift certification, and why it's required for anyone operating at a lift.

1. Currently there are approximately 200-250 fatalities and 95,000 injuries due to Forklift related accidents every year here in the USA
2. There is a penalty up to \$7,000/day per employee if a company allows employees operating a Forklift without the proper training and certification. This penalty could be retroactive and apply to each employee working without the proper certification and training.

There are two types of training, a Train-the-Trainer and individual Forklift Training. The Train-the-Trainer is with the latter intended primarily for foremen, supervisors, managers, and those responsible for workplace safety. OSHA certification requires that forklift training consists of a combination of formal instruction, practical training, and evaluation of the operator's performance in the workplace.

Many dealers provide training at their location if you only have a couple of operators. But for larger groups, they may be willing to train staff on-site at your facility. Expect to pay between \$60 and \$200 per person.

For a detailed list of the OSHA requirements pertaining to forklifts, including employer responsibilities and worker rights, as well as a collection of safety resources like daily checklists for powered industrial trucks, visit the ["Powered Industrial Trucks – Forklifts"](#) page on the OSHA site.

Forklift leasing and financing

Because of the high initial cost, almost all forklifts are either leased or financed. Some manufacturers provide financing and forklift leasing through their dealers. In other cases, the dealer may contract a third-party bank or leasing company.

When manufacturers subsidize a forklift loan or lease, they can offer highly favorable terms. But whenever you're dealing with a third-party, compare the financing terms to those you could get through your own bank to make sure you're getting the most cost-effective deal.

EPA regulations

The final aspect used to determine the best dealer is the familiarity they have with EPA regulations specific to your area. In general, forklift manufacturers are required to ensure their IC engines are compliant with state and federal emissions regulations, specifically EPA Tier 1 through Tier 3. These laws are already enforced and the more-stringent Tier 4 hydrocarbon (HC) limits are currently being phased in through 2015.

Check for conformity when choosing your forklift by ensuring the dealer lays out – point by point – the machine's compliance. This is especially crucial when considering used equipment. For more information on emission standards for on-road and non-road vehicles and engines, review the [EPA's Reference Guide](#).

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