

SAFE USE OF HYDRAULIC PALLET TRUCKS

Applies to: Standard, long-fork, short-fork, low-profile, quick-lift, high-lift, galvanised, stainless steel & rough-terrain pallet trucks

Purpose

Hydraulic pallet trucks are manually operated load-moving devices used for handling palletised goods in warehouses, workshops, sites, and loading areas.

They use a hydraulic pump system to raise forks under pallets and transport loads safely over short distances.

This leaflet provides guidance for safe operation to prevent overloading, tip-overs, crushing injuries, or pump/steering failure.

Before Use

- Inspect pallet truck – Check forks, pump unit, handle, wheels, linkage, and frame for cracks, bends, corrosion, or leaks.
- Verify SWL – Ensure truck capacity exceeds the pallet load (commonly 2,000–3,000kg).
- Check hydraulic pump – Ensure no oil leaks, worn seals, or damaged release mechanisms.
- Inspect wheels
 - Nylon wheels: hard floors, low rolling resistance
 - Poly/soft wheels: quiet running, floor protection, wet areas
 - Steel wheels: heavy-duty industrial surfaces
- Test lift – Pump forks with no load to confirm smooth operation.
- Check lowering control – Ensure the release lever works smoothly and controllably.
- Inspect pallet – Ensure it is intact, not rotten, broken, or missing slats.
- Confirm floor surface – Must be level, firm, and free of holes, oil, debris, or slopes.
- Check for obstructions – Doors, ramps, thresholds, and tight corners.
- Ensure operator competence – Only trained personnel should operate pallet trucks.

During Operation

- Position forks fully under the pallet with load evenly distributed.
- Ensure forks are centred to avoid tipping.
- Pump slowly to raise load only enough to clear the floor (minimal lift height).
- Push, don't pull — pushing gives better control and reduces injury risk.
- Maintain visibility — use a banksman if load obstructs view.
- Travel slowly, especially when turning or carrying high loads.
- Keep hands, feet, and legs clear of wheels and the underside of the pallet.
- Maintain a wide stance for stability.
- Use both hands when manoeuvring heavy loads.
- Lower the load fully and gently before parking.
- Maintain exclusion zones around narrow aisles or blind corners.

Do Not

- Exceed the rated capacity of the pallet truck.
- Lift people or stand on forks.
- Use on slopes, ramps, loose gravel, or unstable ground without purpose-built equipment.
- Drag the load sideways or twist forks under tension.
- Use damaged pallets (broken slats, protruding nails, rotten timber).
- Travel with forks raised higher than necessary.
- Use a pallet truck with leaking hydraulics or damaged wheels.
- Store with load raised — always lower before leaving unattended.

After Use

- Lower forks fully and store truck in a safe designated area.
- Clean wheels and forks — remove debris that may affect movement.
- Inspect pump for oil leaks or damaged seals.
- Lubricate pivot points, pump linkages, and wheel bearings if required.
- Report and tag out defective pallet trucks immediately.
- Keep pallet trucks indoors or under cover to prevent corrosion.
- Maintain routine inspection and service records under PUWER requirements.

Safety Reminders

- Always follow manufacturer instructions and SWL markings.
- Push rather than pull for improved control and reduced strain.
- Maintain good housekeeping and clear travel paths.
- Never exceed the rated load or lift unstable pallets.
- Use appropriate PPE: gloves, safety boots, high-visibility clothing.
- Only trained operators should handle pallet trucks.
- Stop operation if unsafe conditions develop (e.g., floor damage, load shift).

Support and Maintenance

For service, inspection, and spare parts, contact your local Lifting Gear and Safety Depot

Depot List

Bristol: 0117 9714883

Avonmouth: 0117 9550456

Newport: 01633 334450

Port Talbot: 01639 540007

Pembroke: 01646 574000

Plymouth: 01752 474488

Fareham: 01329 550988

Redruth: 01209 703990