

SAFE USE OF QUICK HITCH FORK ATTACHMENTS

Applies to: Strickland, Rhinox, Geith, Miller, Attach2, CP Attachments, and similar excavator quick-hitch mounted fork attachments

Purpose

Quick hitch fork attachments are designed to allow excavators to lift, carry, and position palletised or loose loads using fork tines mounted via a quick hitch coupler.

They are commonly used for handling pallets, pipes, kerbs, blocks, steelwork, and construction materials.

This leaflet provides guidance for safe operation to prevent dropped loads, attachment detachment, tipping, or machine instability.

Before Use

- Inspect the fork attachment – Check frame, fork tines, backrest, hitch interface, locking pins, and welds for cracks, bends, or deformation.
- Verify SWL – Ensure the fork attachment's rated capacity exceeds the intended load.
- Check quick hitch compatibility – Confirm the attachment is approved for the specific hitch type and pin size.
- Inspect hitch locking system – Ensure the coupler fully engages and locking pins are correctly seated and secured.
- Test hitch engagement – Lift the attachment slightly off the ground and crowd back to confirm positive lock.
- Inspect fork tines – Check for cracks, excessive wear, bent tips, or twisted blades.
- Check tine retention – Ensure adjustable tines are locked securely in position.
- Confirm load chart – Ensure the excavator's lifting capacity at the working radius exceeds the combined load and attachment weight.
- Check ground conditions – Must be firm, level, and free from voids or slopes.
- Ensure operator competence – Only trained and authorised excavator operators should use fork attachments.

During Operation

- Position forks fully under the load and keep them level.
- Centre the load evenly across both forks.
- Keep the load low when travelling.
- Lift slowly and smoothly — avoid shock loading.
- Maintain a vertical lift path.
- Keep the machine square to the load.
- Use a banksman when visibility is restricted.
- Maintain exclusion zones around the load.
- Keep people well clear of suspended loads.
- Avoid sudden slewing or braking.
- Place loads down gently and ensure stability before releasing.

Do Not

- Exceed the SWL of the forks or excavator lifting capacity.

- Lift people or use forks as a work platform.
- Carry loads side-on or unbalanced.
- Use damaged, bent, or cracked fork tines.
- Travel with raised loads.
- Drag loads along the ground.
- Lift from only one fork tine.
- Use the attachment if the hitch is not fully locked.
- Operate on steep slopes or unstable ground.
- Leave suspended loads unattended.

After Use

- Lower the attachment fully to the ground.
- Park the excavator safely and isolate hydraulics.
- Inspect forks, frame, and hitch interface for damage.
- Clean dirt and debris from locking areas.
- Lubricate moving parts if specified by the manufacturer.
- Store the attachment on level ground or a rack.
- Tag out and report any defects immediately.
- Maintain PUWER and LOLER inspection records where applicable.

Safety Reminders

- Always confirm hitch engagement before lifting.
- Never exceed SWL or machine lift capacity.
- Keep loads low and centred.
- Maintain exclusion zones around lifting operations.
- Use correct PPE: helmet, gloves, safety boots, and hi-vis.
- Only trained operators and banksmen should be involved.
- Conduct full pre-use checks before every shift.

Support & Maintenance

For servicing, inspection, testing, and spare parts for quick hitch fork attachments, contact your local Lifting Gear & 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