



SHARP START



October 8 — Know the Capacity Before You Lift

I was tasked with unloading and installing a 5000 lb fan with a 10000 lb forklift. The fan was so big that it had to be 48" out on the forks. This reduces the lifting capacity to 5000 lbs.

Contacted the rental company and retrieved a 12000 forklift to utilize for this job.

Capacity Depends on More Than the Number on the Forklift

A 10,000-lb forklift may sound like it has plenty of capacity for a 5,000-lb load. But this job involved a 5,000-lb fan that had to be positioned 48 inches out on the forks because of its size. That changed the lifting capacity of the equipment and left the planned forklift at its limit for the load.

Instead of trying to make the 10,000-lb forklift work, the job was stopped and the rental company was contacted. A 12,000-lb forklift was brought in to handle the fan.

This is an important reminder that the capacity listed on a piece of equipment isn't always as simple as comparing two numbers. The way the load is positioned and the configuration of the equipment matter. When the load has to be extended farther out, we need to make sure the equipment is still capable of safely handling it in that configuration.

The important part of this observation is the decision to recognize the limitation before making the lift. The crew didn't wait until the forklift was unstable or the load was in the air to find out whether the equipment was adequate. They looked at the actual job, recognized that the size and position of the fan changed the situation, and got equipment with the appropriate capacity.

Hazards

- Exceeding the forklift's rated capacity
- Loss of forklift stability
- Load shifting or falling
- Equipment damage
- Serious injury to employees in the area
- Using equipment that is not adequate for the load and configuration

Words of Wisdom

Don't choose equipment based only on the weight of the load. Consider how the load must be positioned, verify the equipment's capacity for that configuration, and make sure the equipment is right for the job before the lift begins.

Pause and Think

- Do you know the actual weight of the load you're preparing to move?
- Does the position of the load change the equipment's lifting capacity?
- Have you checked the equipment's capacity for the way the load will actually be handled?
- What should you do if the equipment appears to be at or near its limit?
- Are you willing to stop and get different equipment when the planned equipment isn't adequate?

Closing Thought

The safest lift is planned before the load leaves the ground. Know the load, understand how its position affects capacity, and make sure the equipment is capable of doing the job safely.