



The new normal:

Effective lift truck safety as the world
moves forward



In just a week, the NBA season came to a halt, schools closed and businesses shutdown across the country. The cause? An all-hands-on-deck effort to combat the spread of COVID-19, with only select business remaining open to provide critical supplies and services. New cases climbed higher and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated guidelines for hygiene and safety, while essential businesses nationwide [scrambled to source critical personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) for workers.

Months later, industries and companies across the country are getting back to work, but the lasting impact of COVID-19 has changed how businesses operate. Face shields, plastic barriers, hand sanitizing stations and even socially distanced workplace configurations are all becoming part of the new reality as businesses of all types get back to work.

Supply chains are uniquely positioned on the frontlines, now with the mandate to not only work efficiently, but safely – adopting best practices for health and hygiene at every level. Lessons learned during the initial months of the pandemic are informing how warehouses, distribution centers and other facilities operate as economies re-open.

But how does getting back to work in the era of COVID-19 work for lift truck operations? From daily operation to service calls, personnel interact with lift trucks in several ways, all of which can risk virus transmission without proper sanitization. Developing and implementing best practices requires drawing on guidance from the CDC and applying it to the unique nature of your facility, including specific equipment used and its applications.



Provide personnel with the right supplies

Equipping personnel with sanitization supplies and PPE, including nitrile gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, face masks and hand towels helps enable them to adhere to guidelines for cleaning surfaces and limiting the airborne spread of viruses. The [CDC provides a general framework](#) for cleaning procedures and sanitization products, with EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19 and recommended alternatives, including minimum alcohol content for sanitizing solutions. Customizable carrier kits can attach to lift trucks, so that operators and technicians have necessary supplies close at hand throughout their shift.



Sanitize lift truck equipment effectively

Knowing and understanding the high-touch points on lift trucks are essential to effective sanitization. The graphic below maps the high-touch points for a narrow aisle reach truck. Information on other lift truck product classes is available [here](#).

1 High-touch points when entering the reach truck

- Seat back
- Operator console frame

2 High-touch points when inside the compartment

- Control handle
- Tiller handle
- Communication radios, keyboards
- Operator interface display and any other touch screens

3 Additional high-touch surfaces

- Truck access covers for daily checks
- Battery connector
- Forks, fork pins





Make sanitization part of daily routines

Whether a technician visiting for a service call or an operator preparing for a normal shift, all personnel who interact with a lift truck should wipe down and sanitize the lift truck, work area and any tools before starting work and again once they finish. Consistent application of sanitization procedures is key.

To help facilitate regular compliance, the checklist feature on lift truck telemetry solutions like Yale Vision can be customized to add sanitization procedures along with regular OSHA-mandated safety checks operators must complete at the beginning of each shift.

Developed in connection with recommendations from the CDC, Yale's pre-shift and end-of-workday lift truck sanitization checklist includes the following:

Pre-shift

- ☐ Wipe down and sanitize the lift truck, work area and tools using approved disinfectant spray. Pay special attention to high-touch surfaces entering the truck, inside the operator compartment and others.
- ☐ Put on PPE (gloves, face mask).
- ☐ Provide plenty of hand sanitizer and hand towels on the truck or at the work station.

Post-shift

- ☐ Return the lift truck to the parking area or charging station.
- ☐ Wipe down and sanitize the equipment.
- ☐ Provide a visual display that the lift truck has been sanitized, with a sign, band or other company approved indication.
- ☐ Remove gloves by turning them inside out and roll one inside the other.
- ☐ Dispose of PPE (gloves, face mask) and cleaning supplies (wipes, paper towels, shop towels) used while cleaning the truck in company approved disposal bins.



Manage risk with vendor consolidation

With a virus capable of spreading quickly from person to person, introducing outside personnel can bring potential risk of exposure – even with strict policies in place for social distancing, PPE and sanitization. CDC guidelines recommend limiting the number of individuals gathering in a space at one time, tracking visitors and properly equipping them to follow site-specific safety protocols. An [article from Healthcare Business & Technology](#) emphasizes the importance of visitor management during the COVID-19 pandemic saying, “If anyone can enter your facility, everyone is at risk.”

Of course, the world is moving forward and industries are ready to get back to work. The challenge becomes developing relationships with a limited number of trusted vendors for essential tasks like service, preventive maintenance and even stocking sanitization supplies. Consolidation allows operations to more efficiently scale up a variety of services by leveraging a partner already familiar with facility health and hygiene practices. This can limit the redundancy of health briefings and trainings, and reduce the amount of ongoing management and communication to help facilitate compliance.

Stay on top of maintenance

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, many materials handling operations postponed critical maintenance and repairs in an effort to limit the risk of outside personnel introducing the virus. But this course of action comes with another set of risks, as equipment failure can stymie productivity and even threaten workplace safety.

Managing the risk of virus transmission and taking care of critical repairs and maintenance does not have to be a binary decision. Many leading service organizations have proactively developed their own measures against the virus and are equipped to accommodate site-specific requirements for hygiene and safety. For example, some Yale dealers have separate equipment drop-off and service locations to

limit contact between employees, have strict procedures for hygiene and outfit service technicians with PPE and CDC-approved sanitization supplies.

Talk to your lift truck maintenance and repair partner about their approach to health and safety, and how they can perform essential service while adhering to site-specific guidelines.





Build new habits for the new normal

All industries must make adjustments to keep personnel safe and healthy. Consistency and collaboration are key, as in order for guidelines to combat the virus to be effective, they must be strictly followed at every opportunity by all involved. By turning effective practices into new habits, the world can move forward from the COVID-19 pandemic and take a renewed focus on core business.

To learn more, visit www.yale.com.