

Electric Forklift

Used Electric Forklift Rialto - An electric forklift is a forklift truck that uses an electric motor to generate power as opposed to an internal combustion model. The electricity source is derived from either a fuel cell or internal industrial batteries. Internal batteries often provide the electrical source. They are capable of being recharged by connecting the battery to a source that is electrically compatible. These rechargeable batteries are lead-acid or lithium-ion battery. Electrical production by means of a fuel cell is similar to a battery source but cannot be recharged by connecting to an electrical source, instead requiring refueling. Electrical forklifts can do the same type of work as internal combustion engine forklifts. Both models utilize two power horizontal forks to load, transport and unload items. The source of power is the main difference between an internal combustion engine and an electrical forklift model. Electrically powered forklifts are typically used in warehouses and other indoor facilities where an internal combustion engine would cause poor air quality for workers.

Electric Forklift Classifications The electric forklift truck can fall into one or more forklift truck classifications. They are:

1. Class 1: Electric Motor Rider Trucks The Class 1 Electric Motor Rider Trucks are one of the classifications. These models have cushion or pneumatic tires. Cushion tires are generally used on smooth indoor surfaces and pneumatic tires are mostly used for exterior applications.
2. Class 2: Electric Motor Narrow Aisle Trucks The Class 2 Electric Motor Narrow Aisle Trucks are another classification. These units function within very narrow aisle locations with limited space. This design enables maximum storage space. Class 2 models feature a modified design to limit the amount of space the forklift takes up.
3. Class 3: Electric Motor Hand or Hand-Rider Trucks These forklifts are hand-controlled, which means they do not ride on the forklift but rather is positioned in front of the forklift. The operator controls the forklift using a steering tiller.
4. Class 6: Electric and Internal Combustion Engine Tractors This classification includes forklifts that allow for a broad application use. In the electric forklift version, they are usually used for indoor use or dry outdoor use.

A list of forklift trucks that are typically powered by electricity are:

Sources of Electricity for Electric Forklifts Electric forklift models are mainly used on even, flat surfaces indoors. Battery powered forklifts prevent the emission of harmful gases and are suggested for indoor facilities, such as healthcare and food-processing facilities. Refrigerated jobs prefer to use fuel cell forklifts. They make no emissions and are capable of working in colder locations without a power reduction, unlike battery-operated models.

Lead-acid battery The main type of rechargeable battery is lead-acid batteries. Their capacity to supply high current surges allows for a significant ratio of power-to-weight. These affordable models consistently make lead-acid models popular batteries for electrical forklifts. It's important to know that lead-acid batteries can possibly freeze during frigid temperatures and this type of battery requires on-going maintenance.

Lithium-ion Battery A Li-ion or lithium-ion battery is a different kind of rechargeable battery commonly used in electric forklift models. Explosions or fires may result in these batteries if they are improperly charged or damaged due to the flammable electrolyte they contain. Lithium-ion batteries are also more expensive than lead-acid batteries, at least initially. However, they provide more efficiency than lead-acid batteries and require no maintenance. Another benefit is that the lithium-ion batteries can operate with a wider temperature range and better energy densities compared to lead-acid varieties.

Fuel Cell Fuel-cell powered forklifts have some of the benefits of both battery operated forklifts and internal combustion engine forklifts. Like forklifts powered by battery, fuel cell power produces no local emissions. One disadvantage is that fuel cell power efficiency is 40 to 50 percent which is about half the efficiency of lithium-ion batteries. However, fuel cell power has a higher energy density which can allow electrical forklifts to run longer. Fuel cell powered forklifts also have the advantage of performing better in lower temperatures as lithium-ion batteries. Refrigerated warehouses rely on fuel cell models due to their ability to function in cooler locations. Different from batteries, fuel cells rely on refueling with a fuel source to create an electrical current. Fuel cells only require approximately 3 minutes to refuel instead of the much longer recharging time for

rechargeable batteries. It is beneficial for businesses that rely on many forklifts that operate numerous shifts to use fuel cell models since they don't have the same downtime for charging batteries.

Pros and Cons of Electrically Powered Forklifts

Advantages of Electric Forklifts

When a lift capacity doesn't have to be greater than 12,000 lbs. electric forklift trucks are often a better option compared to combustion engine forklift trucks. There are many factors to consider in each specific application in order to determine whether an electric forklift is the best option. Taking a look at the pros and cons of electric forklifts versus internal combustion engine forklifts is necessary. Specific advantages of electric powered forklift models vs. internal combustion engine models are listed below.

1. The operating costs of battery-powered electric forklifts are significantly lower compared to internal combustion models since fuel costs continue to increase.
2. The price of electricity is usually more stable and predictable than combustible fuel. This makes electrical forklifts a benefit when considering budget needs for projected operating expenses.
3. Electric forklift trucks rely on recharging stations which eliminates the requirement of fuel transportation and storage for both the equipment and the job site.
4. Both fuel cell and battery-powered electric forklifts produce zero noise pollution or emissions. The back-up alarm is the main exception; however, this is a normal characteristic of internal combustion forklifts as well.
5. Operator equipment and fatigue is reduced in electric forklift models thanks to the automatic braking technology.
6. There are longer intervals between maintenance requirements for electric forklifts compared to internal combustion models due to less moving parts used by a battery-powered or a fuel cell unit.

Disadvantages of Electric Forklifts

For many of the reasons listed above, forklifts powered by electrical means have been more popular than power by internal combustion engines in recent years. There are numerous working conditions however that make electrical models less practical. Some of the disadvantages the electrical forklift has when compared to internal combustion engine forklifts are set out below.

1. Electric forklifts typically have a limited lifting capacity of approximately 12,000 pounds or less which eliminates them as an option from larger jobs. Sometimes this means an internal combustion engine forklift is chosen even for jobsites where heavy jobs are few and far between but still a requirement.
2. Facilities require recharging stations to accommodate electric forklift trucks. If there are none currently installed, this will cost significantly more.
3. Battery life can be affected by improper charging. They need to be regularly monitored to ensure they are not being charged too frequently or infrequently.
4. Electric forklift trucks are also initially more expensive than internal combustion engine forklifts.
5. In some older facilities, the electrical system may need to be upgraded to accommodate an increased voltage requirement of battery powered forklifts.
6. Battery powered forklifts sometimes require machinery to lift or lower the heavy batteries when replacement of batteries is necessary.

All in all, electric forklifts have many advantages over internal combustion engine forklifts but still are not appropriate in many outdoor applications, mostly due to weather and weight restrictions.