



WHITE PAPER

Enhancing productivity through safety

Reduce costs and improve operator performance

Productivity is a must-have for 3PLs

Third-Party Logistics (3PL) providers are playing an increasingly critical role in the modern supply chain, handling everything from warehousing and distribution to transportation and fulfilment. The right choice of materials handling equipment plays a vital role in helping 3PL providers better service their customers.

With the rise of e-commerce and omnichannel retailing, the demand for 3PL services is only set to increase in the coming years. Outsourcing of logistics and supply chain management to an external provider, including warehousing, transportation, and order fulfilment, can assist a company in reducing costs, increasing flexibility, and provide access to specialised expertise.

This means 3PLs are in a time of great opportunity. However, in the highly competitive world of logistics and warehousing, efficiency is key. Material handling equipment plays a crucial role in the success of 3PL operations, enabling providers to move products quickly and efficiently through their warehouses and distribution centres. Inefficient equipment can lead to bottlenecks, reduced productivity, and increased costs.

At the same time, 3PLs across EMEA face challenges around labour. Seasonal volume and high turnover combined with a small skilled labour pool has created workforce shortages in many areas. Retaining workers and reducing turnover is now essential, so ergonomic considerations, reinforcing positive driver behaviour, and managing safety are of greater importance.

Encouraging a safe workplace

Estimates from an international project show that work-related accidents and illnesses cost the EU at least €476 billion every year.

Today's fast turnaround, customer satisfaction-driven economy puts more pressure than ever on warehouse and distribution centre employees to meet productivity targets. With tight order fulfilment deadlines and long hours pushing people and processes to their limit, operations can be vulnerable to safety risks, including:

- Operator error
- Incidents and injuries
- Local health and safety regulation violations and fines
- Insufficient maintenance practices

This white paper offers a step-by-step approach to help encourage a healthy, safe workplace through proper training, innovative technologies, and maintenance best practices.



Make training a priority to reduce operator error

Operators with poor or insufficient training can create unsafe situations and reduce their ability to meet productivity standards. To encourage a culture of safety, local health and safety regulators will usually dictate specific training requirements and standards. Often, that training will also be tailored to their exact use of the equipment – specific to the site, truck class, and application.

Hands-on safety demonstrations and practical instruction are usually essential elements of training programmes.

Assigning an experienced mentor, manager, or supervisor to work directly with new staff provides an additional resource to answer questions and pass on facility knowledge, potentially increasing the chances of a successful induction period.

In addition to operators, pedestrians must understand how to interact safely with lift trucks. These employees should participate in training that addresses pedestrian safety issues throughout the facility, including interactions with forklifts trucks and other mobile equipment, and should understand the hazards presented by mobile equipment in that facility.

A pedestrian training programme should also cover topics such as wearing safety vests for greater visibility, posting pedestrian signs in locations where forklift trucks operate, and, where possible in each facility, providing separate travel zones for pedestrians and trucks.

Correctly training employees can help organisations:

- Reduce lost-time injuries
- Limit incidents resulting in unexpected costs
- Improve compliance and avoid related fines
- Improve operator efficiency
- Decrease product damage
- Reduce forklift downtime



Some forklift safety incidents may be attributed to operator error. Effective training may help reduce these incidents, while improving operator performance, helping increase throughput and reducing downtime.

Adhere to safety protocols with robotics

High warehouse staff turnover continues to be widespread across much of EMEA. The higher the turnover, the larger the training burden facilities face to upskill new operators. And with new, inexperienced operators comes increased risk of not following site-specific safety protocols and traffic rules.

Robotic trucks may help some applications reduce the risk of incidents and collisions, without the extensive onboarding and training required by new operators. Yale robotic trucks can adapt to surroundings and real-time conditions, while strictly following safety protocols, thanks to navigation technology and site-specific programming.

Warehouse workers must also be trained on how to properly interact with robotic lift trucks. While robots have sensors and systems designed to prevent impacts, guests and facility personnel can be unpredictable, which makes clear explanation and enforcement of rules all the more important.



According to an international study, Organisations augmented by automation technologies are 33% more likely to be “human friendly” workplaces, where employees are 31% more productive. Why? Because robotic equipment frees workers from the monotony of repetitive tasks and allow them to focus on more rewarding work.

Use telemetry to protect assets, manage costs, and optimise productivity

Technology can also help companies manage equipment and operator behaviour. Remote data monitoring solutions, such as telemetry systems, make critical maintenance data accessible, while also providing alerts and fault codes related to hazardous driving behaviours, such as excessive speed or impacts. Having access to this kind of data allows organisations to isolate and work on rectifying problem areas and reinforce best practices to promote safety.

Using telemetry to enhance safety:

- Tracks scheduled periodic maintenance tasks and triggers service calls based on equipment diagnostics
- Restricts truck access to assigned operators only
- Tracks training updates
- Requires pre-shift checklist completion before truck operation
- Identifies efficient routes via GPS monitoring to influence facility layout and traffic patterns
- Provides supervisors with impact detection, alerts and other data associated with operator performance
- Equips managers with data to help identify operators who require additional training



Give your operators comfort and control where it counts

Since operators spend the vast majority of their time sitting, standing and twisting, ergonomics are key for enhancing comfort, productivity, and safety.

Forklift manufacturers have made significant strides in the development of ergonomic features that complement safe materials handling practices. Some of these features include:

- Open air compartments for greater comfort and movement
- Enhanced through-the-mast visibility to avoid straining and awkward positioning
- Padded compartments with adjustable features for support
- Pedal-free floor systems to allow for natural stance and adjustments
- Adjustable steering columns with tilt memory for ergonomic positioning
- Fingertip controls for easy access and low effort activation
- Electric power steering for reducing road shock through the steering wheel or tiller

Carefully evaluate equipment so that operators can stay fresh and productive and avoid injury risk due to poor ergonomics.

Don't skimp on maintenance

Maintenance plays a major role in creating a safe and more productive work environment. Something as common as an oil leak can cause someone to slip, leading to downtime, lost productivity, and financial impacts.

By executing a periodic maintenance programme, organisations can be confident that each forklift receives timely, thorough inspections, while also keeping equipment in peak operating efficiency. Often forklift dealers and OEMs offer complete programmes so that organisations can focus on their core business, rather than equipment maintenance.

When a forklift is out of commission for maintenance or service, do not fill the gap with just any truck. This can put the operator and others at risk by using a piece of equipment that does not fit requirements for the specific task. A proper maintenance programme can help give an operation the correctly configured backup trucks.

How does a predictive maintenance program help curb hazards?

- Timely, thorough forklift inspections
- Confirms that equipment is in peak operating condition
- Helps identify mechanical issues that could be hazardous or costly
- Reduces unplanned downtime, increasing application-specific truck availability

