



How To Extend “Re-Tirement” Of Your Forklifts

It’s easy to overlook the humble tire when it comes to maintaining a forklift. Choose the wrong tire, however, and you could end up with a dramatic increase in fleet operating costs or, worse yet, increased safety risks. Choose the right one, and you can realize significant cost-savings, improved safety, and a more efficient operation. For example, a properly chosen tire can last 40 percent longer.

Making those right decisions can be difficult, because contrary to conventional wisdom, tires are very complex components. There are many brands, types, compounds and treads, which means you must be fully armed with data before making a purchase. Here are some questions we typically ask our customers:

1. What type of fuel (IC or electric) does your forklift use?
2. How heavy is your typical load?
3. How long is your typical run?
4. What kind of problems are you experiencing with your tires now?
5. Does your forklift operate over dock plates?
6. On what types of surfaces do you operate your forktruck?
7. Is your forktruck used for multiple shifts?
8. What percent of time is your forklift loaded?
9. What is your average and top speed of your forklift?

If you are evaluating tires for more than one forklift be prepared to answer the previous questions for each unit.

In addition to knowing the specifics about your tire needs, it will be helpful for you to understand the unique wording used for forktruck tires. Some commonly used terms include:

Durometer is used to describe the hardness of forklift tires. The higher the durometer number, the harder the tire. Most load tires range in durometer from 83 to 95. Our industry uses a couple of standard classifications that cover 80 percent of the tires purchased today.

Softer tires, like rubber, provide better traction for facilities where frequent maneuvering is required. They also are more forgiving of floor debris and offer the operator a more comfortable ride. Be aware, however, tires made of softer compounds create heat and wear faster, making them a less desirable choice for applications where maximum speed and long runs are the norm.



Harder tires are excellent for maximum loads, multiple shifts, long runs and high speed applications. They will wear better and last longer than tires made of softer compounds. But the ride will be harder and the tire more vulnerable to floor debris. They offer less resistance and are well suited to operators especially concerned with energy efficiency.

Universal Compound tires are good all-around tires for the average user, but not always the best choice for durability and traction depending upon your application.

Electric Compound are softer-rolling and provide good traction while at the same time providing lower resistance, making them a good choice for both electric and LP trucks.



The actual tread of the tire is important to consider, too. Pay special attention to whether you want a smooth tire, such as for indoor applications, or a treaded one, for forklifts operated outdoors or over uneven terrain.

We recommend operators track by application how well their tires perform. Create a spreadsheet with rows for each of your forklifts. Track the date tires were purchased, the type of tire, the reason for the replacement and the hour meter reading. Over time, you will see trends emerge that will help you adjust purchasing decisions for the type of performance you need, such as correlations between harder tires and damage, or softer tires and premature wearing.

In the end, there is no one tire that can optimize tread life, traction, durability and fuel efficiency. The key is finding the best fit for each of your forklift material-handling applications. Working with a company that is knowledgeable about forklift tires can assist you in selecting the right application and optimize your fleets for performance. Cardinal Carryor, Inc. has been helping companies select the right tires for decades. Give us a call today to discuss your tire performance and let us help you improve your bottom line!