As a professional driver, you will find that you may need to move cargo or other materials throughout your day. One mechanical device that is helpful in doing so is the manual pallet jack. **Although their operation seems simple, it’s important that you understand the safe operation of these devices and the hazards they may pose.**

**Key II**

The essential personal protective equipment (PPE) you will need includes safety shoes, gloves, and quite possibly a hands-free light for dark spaces. Safety shoes MUST also have soles that have excellent slip resistant traction.

**Key III**

**Always inspect a pallet jack before using it.** Visually examine the lift cylinder, handle, forks, and wheels for cracks, deformities, and significant wear or abuse. The wheels and handle should move freely and smoothly prior to lifting, pushing, or pulling any freight. Raise and lower the forks to ensure they operate smoothly and properly.

**Key IV**

Before you move any pallet, make sure you know where you are moving it, and **chart your course, or verify that the path is clear of hazards.** You want to ensure you have proper clearance and that there is nothing on the ground that might stop the pallet jack suddenly, causing you to slip, trip, or fall. Understand that there is no brake on a pallet jack. Lower the pallet to the ground when you need to stop a heavy pallet that has gathered too much momentum, or any time you need to walk away from a loaded jack.

**Key V**

Always verify that the pallet of freight or, what is being moved, is **stable and stacked properly.** If it is leaning, unbalanced, or has the heavy items on top, do not move it until the load is stabilized properly. If the load begins to fall, **let it fall and never try to catch falling freight.** In general, it is safer to push a load rather than pull it:

- Always push a loaded pallet jack onto a lift gate, minding the edge of the lift gate at all times.
- Pull a loaded pallet jack up a ramp and push it down, **staying on the “safe side” of the load.** Staying on the "safe side" prevents the pallet jack from rolling back on you, or pushing you off the lift gate.