

Picking Versatile And Efficient Attachments

When moving more than pallet loads, these attachments increase productivity and safer handling while reducing product damage.

Lift truck attachments have become indispensable in many material handling applications. In addition to sideshifters, fork positioners and load stabilizers that increase efficiency when moving pallets, there is a wealth of other versatile, more specialized lift truck attachments. They enable a lift truck to pull, push, clamp, lift and rotate practically any load imaginable. In fact, 80% of conventional sit-down lift trucks operate with something besides forks on their masts. Here's a look at these popular, but more specialized, attachments:

Paper Roll Clamps

Anywhere that large rolls of paper are used or moved, you'll find attachments to help. Most attachment manufacturers offer a full line of paper roll clamps to handle various diameters, weights or types of paper. Clamp pads can be specified to match paper type, such as high-grade, recycled kraft, tissue and toweling papers.

Paper roll clamps come with 360-degree rotation that allows the operator to place a roll in any attitude. An option is a 180-degree rotation stop that permanently halts rotation at the vertical handling position.

Technology has enabled attachment manufacturers to develop automated paper roll clamps designed to keep paper rolls as close to perfectly round and undamaged as possible. By linking the hydraulic system to sensors and an on-board computer, these automated clamps detect roll movement and apply the minimum clamp force necessary to secure the roll. A graphic display informs the lift truck operator of the clamping status, position and system condition.

Lateral Clamps

There are several types of clamps that are engineered to meet specific industry needs. They include: Bale clamps - Designed for palletless handling of nearly any type of baled products, bale clamps can be sideshifting or not, and revolving or nonrevolving. Capacities range from 2,500 to 7,000 lbs.

Drum clamps - For applications that require the handling of standard 55-gal. drums, especially in the chemical and petroleum industries, drum clamps can be configured with

various arms to handle one, two or four drums at a time. Capacities are in the range of 2,500 to 3,500 lbs. Drum clamps are available with optional sideshift and/or 360-degree rotation.

Fork clamps - These versatile attachments operate as both a clamp and a fork positioner in a wide range of load capacities (2,500 to 8,000 lbs.). Their ability to position the forks speeds pallet handling and reduces pallet wear. Some fork clamps can be sideshifting and can rotate.

Multipurpose clamps - When the application calls for palletless moving of many types of corrugated, metal and wooden containers, multipurpose clamps allow the lift truck operator to handle a wide variety of load sizes. Sideshifting, nonsideshifting and revolving models are available with capacities in the 2,500- to 7,000-lb. range.

Carton clamps - To handle cartons and appliances without the use (and related costs) of pallets, carton clamps are the attachment of choice. They can grip a single tier or a stack of cartons without damaging the cartons or their contents. Most have thin profile arms to permit close stacking. They come in various frame widths, contact pad sizes and arm opening ranges. Capacities generally range from 1,500 to 6,000 lbs.

Push-Pulls

A number of retailers have eliminated pallets from their distribution systems. To do so, they use paper pallets or slip sheets which require a push-pull attachment. These devices either pull the load onto special wide platen (forks), or they push it off. Some push-pulls mount directly to the lift truck's carriage. These are designed for dedicated slip-sheet handling. Others mount on the lift truck's forks and can be taken off or put on as load types change.

Considerations For Specifying

Most users find that attachments save them money. These savings come from reduced material handling time and related labor costs; fewer damaged pallets, products and facilities; and reduced machine wear.

If you're ready to invest in a lift truck attachment, there are several things to determine before selecting the best model for your application and fleet. If you come in with the following information, we can help you accurately match lift trucks with attachments:

Description of the product to be handled and whether you want to use pallets or not.

Load specifics, including weights, lengths, widths (or diameters) and heights.

Mast specifics, including its lift height, height when it's down (for going through doorways in buildings, trucks and railcars) and forward tilt. You'll also need to know the lift truck's carriage width.

Dock information, such as the dock plate width, the height of trailers in relation to dock height, etc.

Mounting style desired, whether quick-change or pin-type mountings.

Be aware that attachments modify lift truck capacities, so you must get prior written approval from the lift truck manufacturer and change name plates/labels to reflect the modifications.

In addition, there are some installation costs. The lift truck's valving may need to be changed, and hydraulic couplers may be necessary. In some applications, an accumulator can absorb the shock resulting from driving the truck over rough terrain, dockboards, ramps, tracks, floor joints and unpaved yards. Reels may also be needed for the extra hydraulic hoses.