POWERING EFFICIENCY: HOW GEODIS OPTIMIZED OPERATIONS WITH INTEGRATED LITHIUM FORKLIFTS

BIG JOE

Logistics facilities are under increasing pressure as supply chain disruptions, evolving regulations, and shifting market demands have become the new normal. Knowing when and where to invest can be a challenge. But some improvements are always worth it. Boosting efficiency, enhancing productivity, and reducing the risk of workplace injuries are smart moves that pay off, no matter the conditions.

Material handling equipment (MHE) is a key component of these improvements, and it's a significant investment for logistics and manufacturing facilities. Outdated MHE, such as forklifts, can be a drain on productivity internal combustion (IC) forklifts require frequent refueling, and models powered by lead-acid batteries,if not properly maintained, will have reduced capacity increasing time spend charging or swapping batteries throughout the shift.

These types of forklifts may also expose employees to workplace hazards, namely exhaust fumes or, in the case of lead-acid powered vehicles, battery acid. And, as forklifts with previous-generation designs age, service costs and downtime increases, which impacts employees and operations alike if vehicles are out of commission.

Fortunately, there are next-generation technologies available in MHE and forklifts in particular that can solve these challenges and improve operational efficiency. Forklifts powered by lithium-ion batteries are more productive, run longer, and charge faster than trucks powered by lead-acid batteries, and they don't emit emissions inside your facility like IC forklifts.

Recently, GEODIS, a leading warehousing and global logistics solutions provider, sought to make improvements to its forklift fleet at its contract logistics facility in Wisconsin. They invested in 22 integrated lithium-ion battery-powered forklifts from Big Joe to replace their lead-acid powered equipment.

> **"It was time to upgrade our fleet, and with our continuing concerns about handling and maintaining lead-acid batteries, it just made sense to go with Big Joe's integrated lithium-ion forklifts."**
>
> **Gary Lakin,** Director of Operations at the GEODIS facility

How did the change in forklifts turn out? For GEODIS, it's been a win for all facets of the operation.

CHALLENGE: UPGRADE AN AGING FORKLIFT FLEET WHILE MANAGING COSTS

GEODIS provides customized transportation, warehousing, global logistics and supply chain solutions across a network of more than 170 countries. The Wisconsin location handles warehousing services for four separate clients, comprising engine manufacturers to food service companies. Their daily operations involve storing, picking and shipping a diverse set of products.

As Lakin notes, their forklift fleet needed upgrading, yet availability and costs were key factors in making those upgrades. “We had an aging fleet of forklifts that we needed to replace,” he explains. “Choosing Big Joe was heavily influenced by lead times — they were able to accommodate our needs in a timely manner, and their trucks don’t require multiple lead-acid batteries.”

SOLUTION: LITHIUM-ION-POWERED FORKLIFTS SAVE ON COSTS AND INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

GEODIS ordered 22 Big Joe LXE50 integrated lithium-ion forklifts in the fall of 2023 and received delivery in May 2024. The decline in the cost of lithium along with its vertically integrated supply chain, Big Joe was successful in delivering a solution in time and on target.

The facility saw immediate time savings and productivity improvements by not having to change lead-acid batteries mid-shift. Big Joe's integrated lithium-ion forklifts include onboard single-phase chargers to charge when idle, as well as three-phase chargers for fast charging during breaks and between shifts. The more than eleven-hour battery run time with fast charging means they run for an entire shift or more.

> **"These operate well into two shifts for us, which is definitely advantageous compared to lead-acid batteries."**
>
> **Gary Lakin,** Director of Operations at the GEODIS facility

In addition to saving time and money, the operation of these integrated lithium-ion forklifts is superior to their previous fleet. "They're very smooth to operate, and it's easy to control the different operating characteristics," says Lakin. With an LCD screen onboard, these forklifts are simple to program, and they can even run diagnostics via Bluetooth or standard telematics. Their dual AC drive motors also provide fine inching control for precise maneuvers, along with high torque and acceleration.

RESULT: BETTER FOR OPERATIONS AND EMPLOYEES

The return on investment didn't take long. The GEODIS facility saved on costs by not having to purchase multiple lead-acid batteries per truck or the additional equipment that services those batteries. They also avoided fuel costs associated with IC models. Compared to IC forklifts, lithium-ion-powered trucks reduce fuel costs by up to 80%.

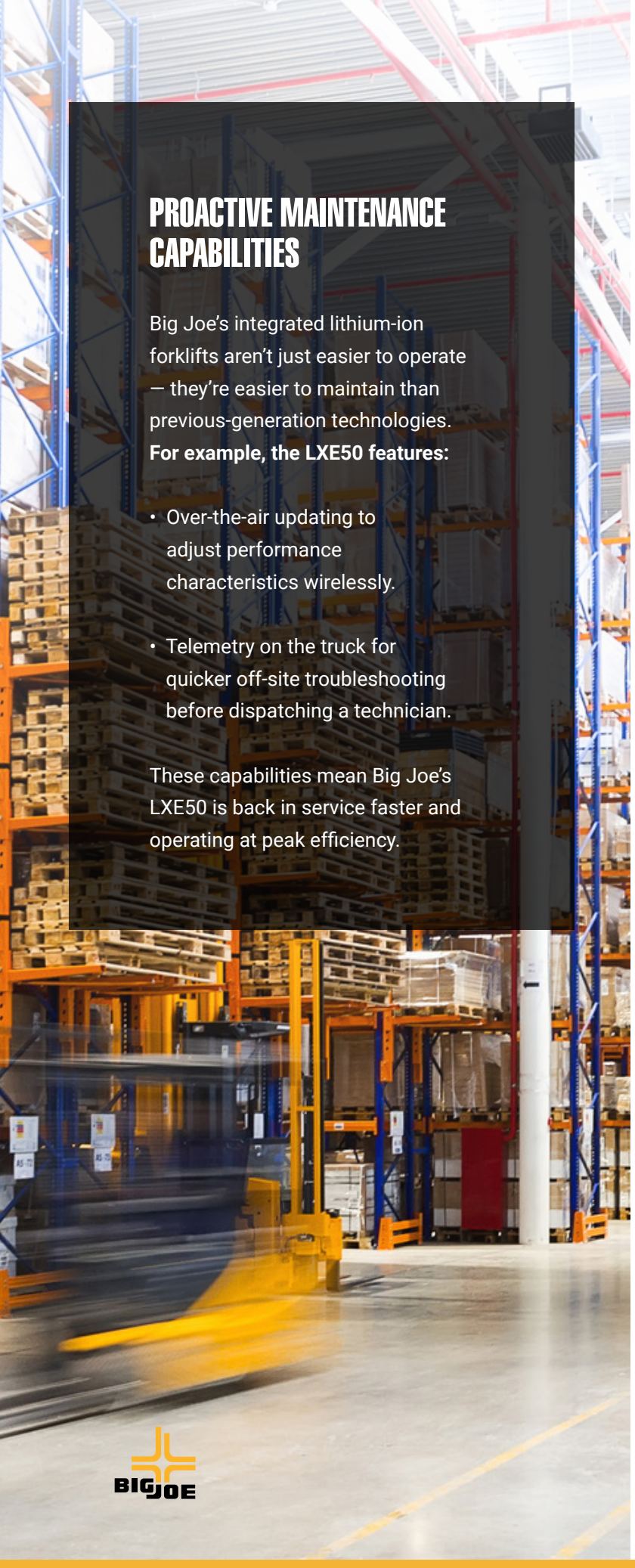
Integrated lithium-ion forklifts also have fewer moving parts than other types of forklifts, which means less maintenance. Logistics operations can lower their maintenance costs by 50% with Big Joe's models. These features all contribute to longer run time and better productivity. "Not having to worry about battery changes, and having the quick-charging capability during breaks, makes a big difference, plus they run for at least an entire shift," Lakin says.

The LXE50 from Big Joe is also better designed for operator comfort. These forklifts are purpose-built around the operator, not built around a lead-acid battery. As a result, the operator compartment is more open and more ergonomic for the operator. Integrating the lithium-ion battery into the design from the very beginning allows Big Joe to provide the best features for those using the vehicles for hours at a time.

> **"Our safety manager has been here for over 20 years, and he's mentioned repeatedly how these are the best-operating forklifts he's worked with. It's not easy to impress someone with that amount of experience, but Big Joe's trucks did it."**
>
> **Gary Lakin,** Director of Operations at the GEODIS facility

Providing employees with safe, easy-to-operate MHE that doesn't require tasks like handling battery acid also demonstrates your commitment to your workforce. Integrated lithium-ion forklifts make employees' workday better and more productive with fewer safety risks. "It helped employee morale," Lakin says, "because they knew we listened to their concerns about our aging fleet, and we invested in the equipment that makes their jobs easier."

With improvements in cost savings, productivity and employee safety, GEODIS' facility has reaped important benefits that keep them well-placed to meet their clients' needs and move materials smoothly through their logistics network.



PROACTIVE MAINTENANCE CAPABILITIES

Big Joe's integrated lithium-ion forklifts aren't just easier to operate — they're easier to maintain than previous-generation technologies. **For example, the LXE50 features:**

- Over-the-air updating to adjust performance characteristics wirelessly.
- Telemetry on the truck for quicker off-site troubleshooting before dispatching a technician.

These capabilities mean Big Joe's LXE50 is back in service faster and operating at peak efficiency.

THE TIME IS NOW TO SWITCH TO LITHIUM-ION FORKLIFTS

There are so many uncertainties that logistics and manufacturing operations just can't control. But any facility can make choices to improve productivity and efficiency while lowering risks for their employees. With state-of-the-art integrated lithium-ion forklifts from Big Joe, companies like GEODIS are realizing cost savings and less downtime, and they're not just improving operations today, but setting themselves up for success tomorrow as well.

"Our fleet of Big Joe LXE50 forklifts has saved time and money, and these vehicles improve operations for everyone working here," Lakin says.

The world may be uncertain, but the benefits of integrated lithium-ion forklifts are assured.

Contact Big Joe to see how lithium-ion forklifts can improve your operations and schedule your free demo today.

Established in 1951, Big Joe is a customer-driven North American material handling equipment company. We distribute innovative products for in-between-handling applications, purpose-built counterbalanced lithium forklifts, and market-leading autonomous solutions. Based in Madison, Wisconsin, we provide engineering expertise, customer service, aftermarket parts, and warranty support to our extensive dealer network and customers.

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630-916-2600
sales@bigjoeforklifts.com
bigjoeforklifts.com

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