

BEFA Floatplane Lift Truck Operator's Manual

Revision A

28 February 2024

The purpose of this brief set of operator's instructions is to provide BEFA floatplane lift truck drivers with the basic knowledge necessary to safely operate the lift truck to launch and retrieve the airplane.

1. **Authorized Drivers.** Only authorized, competent, fully trained drivers may operate the truck. Members may not operate the lift truck until trained and approved by a BEFA check driver, as described below. Approval will be included on the driver's BEFA pilot record.
2. **Driver Training.** Training will be provided by one or more of the BEFA check drivers and follow the BEFA Floatplane Lift Truck Curriculum. This training may occur in conjunction with SES pilot training if the CFI is an approved check driver. Prior to PIC operation of the floatplane truck, a new driver must pass a practical test with a check driver.
3. **Starting, Fueling, and Restrictions.**
 - a. **Starting and warm-up.** After initial startup, the floatplane truck must be warmed up before being moved. Warm-up times are: warm days—2 minutes; cooler days—4 minutes. If in doubt, err on the side of caution—4 minutes.
 - b. **Refueling.** Unleaded auto fuel is preferred for the lift truck. Refuel with 100LL only if unleaded gas is not available. The filler spout is on the left side of the tank forward of the truck cab. Auto fuel is stored in marked containers in the hangar or the shed on the south exterior hangar wall. The truck must be refueled when the fuel gage indicates $\frac{1}{4}$ tank or less. If the fuel containers are empty, notify the BEFA operations manager. You may volunteer to refill them.
 - c. **Speed limits.** The truck may not be driven faster than 15 mph at any time and no faster than 10 mph if carrying the floatplane.
 - d. **Brake check.** When beginning to move, the driver should check the brakes by stopping the truck after it reaches a speed of 3 or 4 mph. If you suspect any brake deficiency, do not launch.
 - e. **Launching/retrieving non-BEFA floatplanes.** Don't do it.
4. **Lifting the Airplane.** Position the truck so the lift rails are centered between the floats. Before driving the truck under the airplane, raise the rails so that they clear the undersides of the spreader bars by no more than two or three inches. This provides maximum clearance of the rails from the floats. Lift the airplane high enough to ensure satisfactory ground clearance.
5. **The Drive to the Ramp.** Back the truck out of the BEFA ramp area to the taxiway. (Backing is acceptable when necessary for short distances.) Before entering the taxiway obtain ground control clearance. During the drive to the ramp, remain in the center of the taxiway. Before driving the lift truck onto the float ramp, check the brakes again. Lower the driver's window.

Place the transmission in neutral and let the truck roll down the ramp to the lake. Stop the truck so that the airplane is positioned with the front spreader bar at the edge of the water.

6. **Launch Procedure.** Avoiding damage to the floatplane and lift truck and injuries to BEFA members and guests are paramount goals for truck drivers. There are two acceptable ways in which the airplane can be launched. The choice depends on wind and ramp conditions. If the winds are such that the dock handler can control the airplane with ropes on the dock side of the airplane to prevent the floats from contacting the lift truck rails, the airplane can be launched using the Float method. After positioning the airplane with the front spreader at the water's edge, back the truck up until the tips of the rails are just under the front spreader bar. Lift the spreader bar 6 inches to a foot and allow the truck to roll 2 feet or so down the ramp so that the airplane will float when it is lowered. Lower the airplane while the dock handler maintains control with the dock side ropes to prevent the airplane from pivoting with the wind. As the rails move below the front spreader bar, promptly back the lift truck out and move it to parking.

If the winds are so strong that control is not certain, and the ramp is dry, then the airplane can be launched using a manual push method. After positioning the airplane with the front spreader at the water's edge, back the truck up the ramp to a level area. Always put the transmission in "park" if you are leaving the cab. With the help of the dock handler, manually push the floatplane off the ramp while one person also holds a bow line. Note: If the winds do not permit the Float method and the ramp is wet, the launch should be deferred until more favorable conditions prevail as there is serious risk of injury on the wet ramp.

7. **Parking after Launch.** If the truck is to be left at the seaplane base while the airplane is flying, it should be parked in one of the designated spaces against the western perimeter fence.
8. **Retrieval Procedure.** Again, lower the driver's window before moving the truck down the ramp to retrieve the airplane. The transmission must be in neutral when the truck is allowed to roll down the ramp under the airplane. Center the rails between the floats. Again, keep the rails as high as possible to assure clearance from the floats. Ensure that all unused lines are on the floats and, if the occupant(s) exit the airplane, be sure that they are clear before lifting it off the ramp.
9. **After-Use Care.** After returning the floatplane to its tiedown spot, park the lift truck at the southeast corner of the BEFA hangar. Position it far enough south that it doesn't block access to the area immediately south of the hangar. Check the fuel and refuel if necessary. Then:
 - a. Roll up both windows.
 - b. Ensure that the ignition is in the off position, and not the aft accessory position.
 - c. Remove any trash from the cab.
 - d. Lock both doors.
 - e. Return the keys to the drawer under the tach books.
 - f. Report any maintenance issues to the Operation Manager.