



Fork Lift Trucks Safe Working Practices

In order for the Council to fulfil its legal obligations under existing Health & Safety legislation the requirements of the Approved Code of Practice – Rider Operated Lift Trucks – Operator Training must be strictly observed.

OPERATORS

No-one should be allowed to drive a fork lift truck unless he or she is 17 years of age, has been selected, trained and authorised to do so, or is undergoing formal training under supervision.

Those selected should show a reasonable degree of physical and mental fitness and intelligence. It is also advisable to select someone who is reliable and mature.

Medical screening is required before employment begins or when selected as a driver and at five yearly intervals after the age of 40 or after prolonged sickness or serious injury. Handicapped or disabled employees should not be ruled out, each case should be taken on its own merits.

Important medical pointers:-

- (a) Full movement of the trunk, neck and limbs and normal agility.
- (b) A stable disposition.
- (c) General effective use of both eyes (including corrected).
- (d) Good hearing (including enhanced or corrected).
- (e) No epilepsy when the individual is eligible for an ordinary driving licence.

Use on public roads

Forklift trucks must not be used on public roads unless they have been registered with the DVLA and carry a current road fund licence, certificate of insurance and MOT if required. Operator drivers must hold a current full ordinary driving licence.

In unskilled and inexperienced hands a fork lift truck is an extremely dangerous piece of machinery and no employee of the Council may drive a forklift truck unless he has been both trained and authorised, by the Authority, to drive the specific type of fork lift truck he has been trained to operate.

1. Safety in forklift truck operations demands that machine stability is maintained at all times. Forklifts should, therefore be carefully selected for the work they are required to carry out.
2. The rated capacity of the machine will be quoted by the manufacturer but checks should be carried out to ensure that the capacity is appropriate for the work to be done.
3. Accident studies have indicated certain points that need particular attention.
 - 3.1 Load stability is crucial and should be checked before travelling.
 - 3.2 Wide loads have tilted and caused fatal accidents. Always ensure that the load cannot tip sideways.
 - 3.3 Access ways must be checked to see that they are wider than any load which may be carried along them. Loads should normally be carried close to the ground, but if they have to be raised to clear obstructions they must be lowered when the way is clear.
 - 3.4 The weight of timber and other porous materials should be re-estimated if wet.
 - 3.5 If the machine has a mast, the load should be raised with the mast slightly tilted back.
 - 3.6 Travelling on slopes, or in poor ground conditions, may be critical. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations at all times.
 - 3.7 There are reversing hazards with forklift trucks as with other transport. Audible warning alarms should be fitted but this does not detract from the obligations of the driver to carry out a visual assessment before reversing.

4. STACKING MATERIALS

Stacking areas should be clearly designated and built on firm level ground with good drainage. There should always be adequate space between walls and stack. (Walls have been known to collapse as a result of the horizontal pressure exerted by the weight of the stack.

- 4.1 The height of a stack of materials should not exceed three times the narrowest base width.
- 4.2 Where possible materials should be interlocked to prevent movement.

Most accidents involving collapse occur during the de-stacking process, when material is removed in an uncontrolled order to suit the operator's convenience, thereby leaving portions of the stack that cannot be supported by the remaining base. De-stacking should always be carried out in the reverse order of the original stacking process.

5. FORK LIFT TRUCKS ATTACHMENTS

Attachments are designed to increase the scope of the truck. In each case it must be remembered that the use of any attachment can radically change the stability of the forklift's characteristics and hence it's safety.

All attachments should be made by the manufacturer of the forklift and fitted only after consultation with them.

The use of attachments may call for additional training of the operators to ensure over loading does not occur.

6. MAINTENANCE

The Provision of Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1999 requires all mechanically propelled vehicles to be in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. In addition to the more specialised maintenance required the driver must carry out the following on a daily basis:-

- 6.1 check that any previous defects have received attention;
- 6.2 check battery levels and top up if necessary;
- 6.3 check tyres for wear, damage and pressure;
- 6.4 check the fork locating and retaining pins;
- 6.5 check water and oil levels;
- 6.6 check brakes;
- 6.7 check that any roll over protection equipment is secure;
- 6.8 check that the steering is positive;
- 6.9 check the mirrors and horn;
- 6.10 check the working of the lift mechanism, inspect the chains for damage and ensure they are suitably lubricated;
- 6.11 check all hydraulic hoses for wear and damage.

If defects are identified the truck should be taken out of use until repaired.

7. If a driver has an accident the Health and Safety department should be notified using the accident report form. If the accident results in injury or damage the driver should have his/her authorisation suspended until the completion of the investigation by which time a decision whether to allow the driver to continue will be made.