



Forklift trucks

Forklift trucks (FLT) are familiar vehicles in many businesses and are often considered essential. However, they are involved in a large percentage of accidents in workplaces. Many of these accidents are due to operators not having enough training. Other reasons include unsuitable premises, poor layout and design of areas where forklift trucks are used, and poor truck maintenance. Following the steps below will help to control the risks when using FLT in your premises.

Step 1 Choosing operators

The people appointed should be physically capable and have shown themselves to have a reliable and mature attitude to their work, and the ability to do the job responsibly. Any employee who is unfit through alcohol or drugs should not be allowed to use a FLT.

Step 2 Training

The training should be carried out by a competent instructor (for example, an accredited trainer) and always include three stages.

- Basic training - the basic skills and knowledge needed to use FLT safely (the course can last up to five days)
- Specific job training - knowledge of the workplace and experience of any special needs and handling attachments (these stages may be combined but should always be off the job).
- Familiarisation training - on-the-job training under close supervision

Step 3 Further training

Regularly reassess all operators to make sure that they continue to use lift trucks safely and to identify a need for refresher training, particularly for those operators who have not used trucks for some time or for those who only use them occasionally.

It is essential that supervisors of operators have enough training to recognise unsafe practices, even if they don't drive trucks themselves.

You should keep records of all the training given to individuals, including conversation and refresher training, and of their performance in associated tests.

Step 4 Authorisation

Employees should not be allowed to use a FLT without written authorisation from their employer. The authorisation should relate to a specific type of FLT and the work for which the employee has been trained. The keys should be removed from the FLT when not in use, and kept in a safe place to prevent unauthorised use.

Step 5 Layout

The driving areas should be as flat as possible and free from obstructions. Roads, gangways and aisles should be wide enough and have overhead clearance for the largest FLT using them. Sharp bends should be avoided where possible and you should introduce one-way traffic systems to reduce the risk of collisions. Pedestrians should not be allowed into FLT working areas. If this is not possible, notices and direction signs should be clearly displayed. Warning alarms and flashing beacons should be fitted to the FLT. Appropriate restraints, such as seat belts, should also be fitted and worn where there is a risk of the FLT overturning.



Step 6 Safe working load (SWL)

Drivers must be aware of the SWL of the truck and make sure they do not go over it. Attachments such as clamps and cages will reduce the SWL of the FLT. You should contact an authorised dealer for advice about the reduced SWL. The operator should be given extra training on using these attachments.

Step 7 Platforms

Never allow anyone to work at height from the fork arms or from a pallet balanced on the fork arms of a FLT. Specifically designed work platforms secured to the truck may be used under limited controlled conditions, for example, changing a light bulb. They are not suitable for moving goods or people from one level to the another, or for order picking.

Step 8 Passengers

Passengers should not under any circumstances be carried in the cab, on the forks or on the sides of a FLT.

Step 9 Battery charging (battery-powered FLTs only)

You should charge batteries in a separate room or special area with good ventilation and no direct ignition sources. You should provide 'No smoking' and 'No naked lights' warning notices in the area.

Step 10 Maintenance

You should follow the manufacturer's or authorised supplier's instructions on inspecting, maintaining and servicing FLTs. Develop a system for reporting faults and for making sure that repair work is carried out. Develop a planned routine maintenance system including:

- daily checks of tyres, brakes and so on by the driver at the beginning of each shift
- for lift trucks in constant use, more in-depth weekly checks (written reports should be made and kept)
- thorough examinations by a competent person every 12 months or in line with a regular thorough examination scheme
- checks by an engineer following an accident, major repair or modification. The engineer should issue a certificate confirming that the FLT is safe to use



Case Study

In January 2016 a Dungannon company was fined £24,000 plus legal costs for a fatal forklift truck accident. The employee was fatally injured when the forklift truck he was driving overturned, trapping him between the vehicle's safety frame and the ground. The employee was not a forklift truck operator and had not been trained on the operation of lift trucks by the company.

For more information

Rider-operated lift trucks. Operator training and safe use (approved code of practice and guidance) L117. ISBN 978-0-7176-6441-2 available on HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk