

## Fork Lift Trucks - Operators & Training



As one of the UK's leading independent materials handling specialists, Stanley Handling receives many requests for information and advice. We have therefore addressed some of the most important and frequently asked questions concerning fork lift truck operators and their training.

### Q. What is the minimum age for operating a fork lift truck?

A. The HSC Approved Code of Practice and Guidance clearly states that 'Children under minimum school leaving age should never operate lift trucks.' It also states that operators of fork lift trucks on docks premises must be at least 18.

Guidance continues that young persons under 18 often lack experience and maturity and are at greater risk than older employees and should not be allowed to operate fork lift trucks without adequate supervision. Many trainers will not accept trainee operators under the age of 17.

The minimum age specified in road traffic legislations apply when fork lift trucks are operated on public roads. Currently this would be aged 17 for trucks up to 3.5tonnes gvw, 18 up to 7.5tonnes gvw and 21 for heavier equipment. (gww = gross vehicle weight = the weight of the fork lift truck plus the load).

### Q. How long does a fork truck driver's license last?

A. There is no central licensing authority for the provision of a fork lift truck driving license.

However, every employer has a responsibility under Regulation 9 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER 98) to ensure that employees have adequate training before they use work equipment as outlined below.

The operator should receive training on each type of equipment he or she may be required to operate. A fully qualified instructor must provide this training and should issue a certificate or other document outlining both the training details and results.

The employer is required to give written authority for any employee to actually operate the equipment and will determine how long such authority remains valid. It is good practice to ensure that the performance of all operators is formally monitored.

### Q. Is refresher training required for fork lift truck operators?

A. There is no legal requirement for fork lift operators to receive routine refresher training however the HSC Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L117) states the following:

'There is no specific requirement to provide refresher training after set intervals but even training and experienced lift-trucks operators need to be re-assessed from time to time to ensure that they continues to operate trucks safety. This assessment, which should form part of a firm's normal monitoring procedures and be formally time-tabled to ensure that it is done at reasonable intervals, will indicate whether any further training is needed.'

In addition to routine monitoring, formal re-assessment is required where operators :

- Have not used trucks for some time
- Are occasional users
- Appear to have developed unsafe working practices
- Have had an accident or near miss
- Have a change to their working practices or environment

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The Fork Lift Truck Association advises that this training should not follow a set programme but should be designed to overcome the weaknesses highlighted by the monitoring/assessment process.

### Q. Are there any medical standards for lift truck operators?

A. It is important that all fork lift truck operators have an appropriate level of medical fitness for the work they are expected to undertake. Employers who have any doubt as to the fitness of their operators should seek professional advice.

Medical considerations are detailed in the guidance booklet HSG6 (published by the HSE) which states :

'It is good practice for all operators and potential operators to be screened for fitness before employment and again at regular intervals in middle age. Examination at age 40 and thereafter at five-yearly intervals up to age 65 is recommended. Operators over 65 should be screened annually. Examination is also recommended in all cases after an accident or sickness absence of more than one month, or after a period if it appears likely that the illness may affect fitness to operate.'

Appendix 2 to HSG6 provides comprehensive advice for occupational health professionals.

### Q. Who provides training accreditation?

A. The Health & Safety Commission recognise a number of bodies as being competent to accredit training organisation for the training of fork lift truck instructors and operators.

When selecting a training or training company, it would be prudent to check that they have been accredited by one of the following bodies and that the accreditation is current. All training instructors offered by Stanley Handling have current formal accreditation.

- Association of Industrial Truck Trainers (AITT) [www.aitt.co.uk](http://www.aitt.co.uk)
- Construction Industry Training Board [www.constructionskills.co.uk](http://www.constructionskills.co.uk)
- Independent Training Standards Scheme & Register [www.itssar.org.uk](http://www.itssar.org.uk)
- Lantra Awards [www.lantra-awards.co.uk](http://www.lantra-awards.co.uk)
- National Plant Operators Registration Scheme (NPORS) [www.npors.com](http://www.npors.com)
- RTITB [www.rtitb.co.uk](http://www.rtitb.co.uk)