

Lift Trucks

Every year there are about 8,000 reportable injuries involving lift trucks. These injuries, some fatal, create suffering for those involved and their dependants. They also involve a heavy cost on the employer's business.

It is the responsibility of management to assess their lift truck operations and introduce safe systems of work that eliminate or reduce risks. Safe systems include procedures for operator training, for traffic and pedestrian movements, and for the control and maintenance of lift trucks. Such systems should be reviewed and updated regularly, and form part of management's overall safety policy.

Lift truck accidents are frequently associated with lack of suitable and sufficient operator training.

GPMU Policy

All lift truck drivers in companies where GPMU members are employed should:-

1. Have undertaken a properly structured 5-day course of practical and theoretical training tutored by a qualified, registered instructor.
2. Have received familiarisation training for any particular truck they are expected to operate.
3. Receive periodic re-training

Coverage

The HSE ACOP applies to most types of lift truck, using the definition "stacking rider-operated lift trucks". "Rider operated" means "any truck capable of carrying an operator and includes trucks controlled from both seated and stand-on positions, which may be fixed or fold-away".

An operator is defined as "anyone who operates a lift truck, even as a secondary or occasional part of their job, and is not limited to people designated as lift truck operators". This means that multi-skilled employees, delivery drivers and management staff, whose jobs may not obviously include lift truck operation, have to be trained if they are to operate a lift truck.

Young people, under 18, should not be allowed to operate lift trucks unsupervised, unless they have the necessary competence and maturity, and have successfully completed appropriate training.

Duty to train

Regulation 9 of PUWER 98 states that,

Every employer shall ensure that all persons who use, or supervise or manage the use of, work equipment have received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods which may be adopted when using the work equipment, any risks which such use may entail and precautions to be taken.

Although non-driving managers and supervisors are not required to undergo full operator training, they need sufficient training to understand the risks involved and the means of avoiding or counteracting them, recognise safe and unsafe practices, and be able to evaluate the advice of fully trained operators to ensure that they do not over-ride that advice to the detriment of safety,

Operator training

Employer should not allow anyone to operate lift trucks, even on an occasional basis, unless they have satisfactorily completed **basic training and testing** as described in the Code.

Instructors

Instructors must have been **trained in instructional techniques and skills assessment**. They must give instruction only on types of truck for which they have been **trained, and successfully tested** as operators. They must have adequate knowledge of the trainee's working environment.

The HSC has recognised the Road Transport ITB as competent to operate a voluntary accreditation scheme for instructors. Under their scheme, trainers require refresher training and re-examination every 5 years.

3-Stage Training

The HSC Guidance says that training should have three elements:-

Basic Training - the basic skills and knowledge required for safe operation (off the job);

Specific Job Training - knowledge of the workplace and experience of any special needs and handling attachments (off the job);

Familiarisation Training - operation on-the-job **under close supervision**.

The Guidance gives specific advice on each stage of training. It says that the ratio of trainee:instructor:truck for basic training of 2:1:1 is probably ideal, and should never exceed 3:1:1 except for lecture sessions.

For specific job training the 2:1:1 ratio still applies, but the training will be tailored to the employers special needs, including site specific conditions, rules and loading requirements; routine servicing and maintenance; safe systems of work

The final stage of training, familiarisation, should cover the application of the skills learned under normal working conditions. **Close supervision is essential**. Only this stage of training may be given by the trainee's own supervisor rather than a qualified trainer. It should include local familiarisation and work related features which it is not practicable to teach off the job.

Written Authorisation

The Guidance says "Employers should not allow personnel to operate lift trucks on any premises without **written authorisation** - except in the case of a trainee under **close** supervision. The authorisation should only be for the type or types of trucks for which **all three** elements of training have been successfully completed".

Records

In addition, the employer should keep a record for each employee. It should identify the stages of training satisfactorily completed, the trucks to which it relates and copies of any certificates of training. Employees will need this evidence on change of employment.

New Employees with Previous Experience

When a new employee claims to be trained, the employer should insist on evidence and satisfy himself that the training and experience is sufficient for the trucks and handling attachments and working environment concerned. Otherwise, the employer should require the employee to be assessed and, if necessary, undergo adequate training.

Accident investigations have shown that many employers are unaware of the need for the careful selection and training of people to drive lift trucks. Training should comprise both theoretical and practical elements and be followed by a test of competence.

A truck of the same type as the one that the person will normally drive and fitted with an identical type of clamp, if appropriate, should be used in the instruction of the driver. A formal appointment scheme in writing and the issuing of permits to drive, are strongly recommended. If in-house training is used, the instructor should be properly trained and qualified as an instructor (not simply an experienced driver) and should attend regular refresher courses.

The names of suitable training organisations may be obtained from regional offices of the Road Transport Industry Training Board.

Further Information

The Approved Code of Practice and Supplementary Guidance
"Rider Operated Lift Trucks - Operator Training"

HSE Guidance Note HS(G)6
"Safety in working with lift truck" HMSO (rev. 1992) £4.25
(ISBN 0-11-886395-9)

EXAMPLE OF A LIFT TRUCK INVESTIGATION

An employee was struck from behind by a reversing lift truck as he walked through a bindery area. Several trucks operated in the area taking finished goods to storage. Stacked goods restricted visibility.

A brief investigation might conclude simply that either the operator or the injured person should have taken more care. Apart from considering the behaviour of the people involved some of the following aspects may also have to be looked at:

organisational - does the health and safety policy and risk assessment cover lift truck operation and make someone responsible for transport safety? Do managers appreciate the risks and know the precautions?

competence - do lift truck operators have the right skills and knowledge? Is training provided when needed? What checks are made of the competence of new employees who claim to have had training or to be experienced?

authorisation - are lift truck operators authorised in writing and issued with permits? Is the authorisation limited to certain tasks or trucks? Are keys kept secure when trucks are not in use?

supervision - do supervisors have enough knowledge to spot hazardous operation? Do they enforce safe operating procedures?

site layout - can trucks and pedestrians be segregated and areas marked? Could a one-way traffic system be introduced? Can reversing be reduced? Is it possible to increase aisle widths? Can stack heights be lower to improve visibility? Is the area well lit and are warning signs posted?

vehicle - were the brakes, steering, tyres, horn and controls working properly? Is the truck regularly maintained? Could visibility from the truck be improved? Would an audible reversing alarm help?

Such an approach will help identify underlying causes, will highlight the necessary precautions and provide senior management with sufficient information on which to base follow-up action. This in turn will help to prevent future injury and loss.

(From PIAC leaflet "Investigation of accidents and ill-health" IAC/L67 1993).