

Lift-truck training

Advice for employers



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Introduction

Lift trucks are widely used for moving materials and goods, but they are involved in about a quarter of all workplace transport accidents. The deaths and injuries caused can ruin lives and businesses. Even when an incident does not cause injury, it can still mean costly damage to lift trucks, buildings, fittings and goods.

This leaflet is aimed at employers and those responsible for the safe operation of lift trucks, as well as those in control of worksites, the self-employed, managers and supervisors. Employees and their safety representatives may also find it useful.

As an employer you are required to provide basic training and testing for all lift-truck operators you employ (both new and existing). Properly trained operators can reduce the risk of lift-truck accidents in your workplace.

An 'operator' in this leaflet is anyone who operates a lift truck, even as a secondary or occasional part of their job, not only those whose job title is lift-truck operator.

The law

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) place certain requirements on employers. You must make sure that all people who use, supervise or manage the use of work equipment have received adequate training, which includes:

- the correct use of the equipment;
- any risks from its use;
- the precautions to take.

If you are self-employed, you need to do the same type of training, and achieve the same standard, as employers are required to provide to their employees.

Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) for lift-truck operator training

This leaflet summarises the main points on operator training from the HSE Approved Code of Practice (L117) *Rider-operated lift trucks: Operator training and safe use. Approved Code of Practice and guidance* (see 'Find out more'). L117 covers the training requirements for operators of 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.

The ACOP text in L117 does not cover straddle carriers, pedestrian-operated trucks and non-lift trucks fitted with removable attachments which modify their function, allowing them to be used temporarily as lift trucks, although you must still provide suitable training for those who operate them.

You can use the detailed guidance in L117 as an indication of the standard of training to provide for all lift trucks.

Who should you train?

Potential lift-truck operators should be:

- reasonably fit, both physically and mentally, to safely control and operate lift trucks, with the learning ability and potential to become competent operators;
- reliable, with a responsible attitude to their work;
- physically capable – you should assess this on an individual basis. You may need to get medical advice and make reasonable adjustments to enable some disabled people to work as lift-truck operators. The Equality Act 2010 is likely to apply;
- over the minimum school-leaving age (16), except in ports, where they must be at least 18 years old, unless they are undergoing a suitable course of training, properly supervised by a competent person. Children under 16 should **never** operate lift trucks. Look at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/index.htm.

Consulting employees

You are legally required to consult all your employees, and listen to what they say, on health and safety matters, including the best ways to provide information and training. Look at *Consulting employees on health and safety* for more information (see 'Find out more').

What should training include?

Operator training should always include three stages:

- Basic training.
- Specific job training.
- Familiarisation training.

Basic training

Basic training should cover fully all the skills and knowledge needed to safely operate the type of lift truck and handling attachments (if any) the trainee will use, including awareness of the risks from lift-truck operation. It should take place 'off the job', without the pressures of production. It is difficult to specify how long a course should last as many things affect the rate of learning, eg the ratio of trainees to instructors, but a course for a novice operator would typically last 3-5 days. See 'Basic training: Objectives to consider' (taken from Appendix 1 in L117) on page 3.

Testing

Instructors should continuously assess a trainee's progress to ensure they achieve the required standards throughout training. At the end of the training, the trainee should pass a test, or tests, to demonstrate that they have the necessary practical and theoretical knowledge and skills to operate lift trucks safely. Appendix 2 of L117 includes suggestions for testing operator skills after basic training.

Basic training: Objectives to consider

After basic training, the trainee should be able to do the following:

- State the reasons for operator training, the risks associated with lift-truck operations and the causes of lift-truck accidents.
- State the responsibilities of operators to themselves and others, including their duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of other people and co-operate with employers and others to help them comply with their legal duties.
- Identify the basic construction and main components of the lift truck, stating its principles of operation and load-handling capabilities and capacities.
- Identify, as appropriate, handling attachments which may be used with the lift truck.
- Locate and state the purpose of all controls and instruments and how to use them.
- Place the forks or other handling attachment in predetermined positions using the appropriate controls.
- Identify various forms of load, and state the procedures for their stacking, destacking and separation; assess the weight, and, where relevant, the load centre of a load; and decide if the load, with its known weight and load centre, is within the truck's actual capacity (safe working load).
- State the factors which affect machine stability, including: turning, especially the speed and sharpness of turn; load security and integrity; rated capacity and rated load centres; centres of gravity; ground conditions; and speed and smoothness of operation.
- Follow correct procedures when loading and unloading vehicles.
- Make visual checks to ascertain the safety, soundness and rating of structures designed to receive loads, and place and remove loads on and from those structures at various heights.
- Pick up and place loads, and drive and manoeuvre the machine forward and in reverse, laden and unladen, on inclines, in restricted spaces and on level ground (including rough terrain as applicable), following correct procedures and precautions.
- Park the machine, following correct procedures and precautions.
- Where applicable state the purpose, and demonstrate how to use, safety devices including stabilisers, level indicators, and load indicators, if fitted, including the importance of using seat restraints.
- Carry out inspection and maintenance tasks appropriate to operators as required by the machine manufacturers (including pre-shift checks) and any relevant legislation.
- State what to do in an emergency while in control of a lift truck, eg if there is a tipover.
- State why it is essential to have vehicle key custody arrangements.

Specific job training

Specific job training will normally follow the completion of basic training, but may be combined or integrated with it. It will be tailored to your particular needs and include, where appropriate:

- knowledge and understanding of the operating principles and controls of the lift truck to be used, especially relating to handling attachments and loads specific to the job (to be repeated when the design of truck is changed);
- routine inspection and servicing of that truck, in accordance with the operator's handbook or manufacturer's instructions, which may reasonably be carried out by the operator (to be repeated when the design of truck is changed);
- using the truck in conditions the operator will meet at work, eg gangways; loading bays; racking; lifts; automatic doors; confined areas; cold stores; slopes; rough terrain; loading platforms; other vehicles; and bad weather;
- instruction on site rules, eg site layout; one-way systems; speed limits; general emergency procedures; using protective clothing and devices including operator restraints and eye and hearing protection; work near excavations and overhead lines; and other hazards;
- training in the work to be carried out, eg loading particular types of vehicle with loads normally found at that workplace; using the lift truck fitted with working platforms where appropriate;
- safe systems of work, which should include custody arrangements for keys.

Familiarisation training

Familiarisation training is the third stage of training, which should be carried out on the job, under close supervision, by someone with appropriate knowledge. This could include:

- applying, under normal working conditions, the skills already learned in basic and specific training, starting with simple tasks and moving on to more complex ones;
- becoming familiar with the lift-truck activities of the employer;
- familiarisation with the site layout, local emergency procedures and any other feature of the work which it is not practicable to teach off the job.

Authorisation

After employees have successfully completed all three elements of training, you should give them written authorisation to operate the type or types of lift truck they have been trained to use. You should not allow anyone to operate lift trucks on any premises without authorisation (except a trainee under close supervision).

Certificates of basic training

There is no legal requirement to issue certificates of basic training, but they provide evidence that operators have received relevant training and achieved an appropriate level of operating ability. The employee will need evidence of training if they change jobs. **Note: There is no such thing as a lift-truck 'licence'.**

Monitoring and assessment

Lift-truck operators, even those who are trained and experienced, need to be routinely monitored and, where necessary, retested or refresher trained to make sure they continue to operate lift trucks safely.

You can identify the need for further training using a formal monitoring and assessment process, carried out by a suitably competent person, such as an instructor. Formally timetable this assessment, eg a retest, to make sure it is done at reasonable intervals.

Where an operator fails this assessment, arrange further training for them. You may find it useful to record these assessments in operators' personnel records.

Refresher training

Regular refresher training will ensure operators:

- maintain good driving habits;
- learn new skills where appropriate;
- reassess their abilities.

Refresher training or retesting might also be appropriate 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 changed their working practices or environment.

There is **no specific time period** after which you need to provide refresher training or formal assessment. However, you may decide that automatic refresher training or a retest after a set period of time (eg 3-5 years) is the best way to make sure employees stay competent. Where you adopt this approach, you will still need to monitor performance in case operators need extra training before the set period ends.

Conversion training

Conversion training enables trained and experienced operators to extend the range of lift trucks they are qualified to drive. It involves learning to operate a truck of a different category, such as a counterbalanced operator converting to operate, eg a reach truck, articulated lift truck, or very narrow aisle man-up stacking truck. Conversion training should follow a similar pattern to initial lift-truck training, including basic, specific job, and familiarisation training and testing.

Records

You should keep adequate records for each employee who has satisfactorily completed any stage of lift-truck training, including conversion and refresher training. The record will need to include enough information to identify the employee and what training they have had. You should also keep records of how they perform in associated tests.

Supervisors

The law requires you to provide adequate supervision, so it is essential that supervisors have enough training and knowledge to recognise safe and unsafe practices. This does not mean they need full operator training, but they do need to understand the risks involved, and how to avoid or prevent them.

Choosing instructors

When choosing how to carry out training, you could:

- send your employees to an external training organisation for training on their premises;
- use a suitably trained employee from your company to train your employees on your premises;
- employ a commercial or self-employed instructor to conduct training on your premises.

Successful training depends on the competence of instructors. You, as an employer, need to assess the competence of any training organisation you choose, as it is your responsibility to ensure your operators are properly trained.

Ask instructors to supply evidence of their training and post-training experience on the type of truck to be used, both as instructor and operator, along with documentation such as:

- a valid certificate of training (instructor qualification);
- an insurance certificate (public liability at least);
- proof they can train on the vehicles concerned.

Voluntary accreditation

It is important that lift-truck operators are trained to the standards outlined in the ACOP, whether using in-house trainers or external training providers. There are a number of organisations who provide accreditation for lift-truck training schemes. These voluntary schemes are intended to:

- help set and maintain professional training standards;
- help employers select training organisations or lift-truck suppliers who offer a good standard of training.

HSE no longer administers an accrediting bodies scheme. However, you can get information about voluntary accreditation schemes from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/lift-trucks/accreditation.htm or 'Find out more'.

Find out more

Consulting employees on health and safety: A brief guide to the law Leaflet INDG232(rev1) HSE Books 2008 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.pdf

Rider-operated lift trucks: Operator training and safe use. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L117 (Third edition) HSE Books 2013
ISBN 978 0 7176 6441 2 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l117.htm

Use lift trucks safely: Advice for operators Pocket card INDG457
HSE Books 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg457.htm

Accrediting Bodies Association (ABA) for workplace transport training
www.abawt.co.uk

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

This leaflet is available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg462.htm

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