

Medical standards for fork lift truck operators

Selecting operators and trainees

Take care when selecting potential fork lift truck operators. They 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.
- 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.

More information is available from the Health and Safety Executive's - Young Persons website [here](#).

Medical considerations

People selected to operate fork lift trucks should be free from disabilities, either physical or psychological, that might pose a threat to their own health and safety or the safety of others who might be affected by them operating fork lift trucks.

Fitness for operating should always be judged on a case-by-case basis. Match the requirements of the driving task with the fitness and abilities of the operator.

Risk assessment

You will need to write a risk assessment to identify any hazards associated with the job and working environment and to identify the areas of concern. Never allow anyone who is unfit because of alcohol or drugs (prescription or recreational) to drive a fork lift truck.

Disabilities

People with disabilities need not be excluded from work as fork lift truck operators as they may have developed compensatory skills. Assessing fitness individually should help ensure that people with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

Reasonable adjustment to work equipment may enable a disabled person to operate workplace transport safely. However, you must always think about their competence in an emergency.

You should obtain medical advice about their suitability for the particular work they will be required to do. The [Equality Act 2010](#) is likely to apply.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

The Drivers' Medical Section within DVLA has published [Assessing fitness to drive](#), which is aimed at health professionals and applies to fork lift trucks on the road, but can be applied to all work with fork lift trucks.

For most work with fork lift trucks, a standard of fitness equivalent to that for the Group 1 entitlement (ordinary driving licence holders) would be appropriate.

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Group 1 Licences are normally valid until 70 years of age, unless restricted to a shorter duration for medical reasons. There is no upper age limit to licensing, but after 70 renewal is required every 3 years. Activities such as working in a particularly demanding environment, working at night or moving highly toxic or explosive materials would probably be more appropriate to the Group 2 entitlement (heavy goods vehicle licence holders).

The minimum age for Group 2 entitlement (category C) is 21. All initial Group 2 licence applications require a medical assessment by a registered medical practitioner. The same medical assessment is required again at 45 years of age and on any subsequent reapplication. Group 2 licences must be renewed every 5 years or at age 45 whichever is the earlier, until the age of 65 when they are renewed annually without an upper age limit.

Health and Safety Executive guidance

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is not prescriptive about the need for medical assessment for fitness to drive fork lift trucks and there is no legislation relating directly to this topic.

However, you may choose to screen potential operators before placement and then follow the guidelines for Group 2 licences contained in DVLA publication [Assessing fitness to drive](#).

Always seek medical advice where there is any doubt about a person's fitness to operate a fork lift truck. It may be useful to apply a selection test to avoid wasteful attempts to instruct unsuitable trainees.

The HSE Medical standards for drivers [website](#) offers guidance for occupational health professionals who are consulted about the medical fitness of workplace transport drivers. Guidance can be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

The HSE Lift Trucks - Frequently asked questions [website](#) contains a variety of guidance.

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Approved Code of Practice L117 Rider-operated Lift Trucks gives practical advice to help employers, including medical considerations when selecting fork lift truck operators.

UKMHA further guidance

Also see UKMHA Fact Sheets 1, 2, 6, 9 and 12 for further information.

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The information in this Fact Sheet has been assembled and interpreted to give truck owners and users basic guidance on frequently asked questions. Further important information will be given in the quoted reference documents. Responsibility for meeting the safety obligations discussed rests with the employer, and the UKMHA will not accept liability for any problem arising as a result of the content of this document. Technical Bulletins, containing more detailed information and updated as appropriate, are made available free to members of the [UKMHA SAFE USER GROUP](#).

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