

## Speed and fork lift trucks

**Fork lift trucks are not designed to travel at speed. The steering and braking characteristics are different from many other types of vehicle. When used incorrectly, especially if traveling at excessive speed, the truck may become unstable and shed its load, or even turn over. An unladen fork lift truck is less stable than a laden one.**

### Risk assessment

The maximum speed of a fork lift truck operating in your specific environment should be based on a thorough risk assessment, including but not limited to, traffic routes, driving surfaces, load types, segregation of pedestrians, lighting, weather conditions.

The following actions should be considered, as a minimum:

- Carry out a risk assessment and determine the maximum speed(s) to be used.
- Communicate this to the operators and use signs where appropriate.
- Ensure the limits are enforced by managers and supervisors.
- Deploy a strict training regime and ensure that operators are trained in the use of all equipment types that they are required to operate by an accredited trainer/training company. Refresher training should be regularly provided at intervals of 3-5 years.

### Type of fork lift truck

Fork lift trucks vary in size, weight and construction. These characteristics, together with site conditions, should be taken into account to determine the appropriate speed of the vehicle.

### Floor surface

The condition and gradient of floor surfaces will determine the distance required to stop. Wet, icy and other slippery conditions may significantly increase stopping distances.

### The load being carried

A fully laden fork lift truck requires a longer stopping distance.

### Visibility

Driving speed should be lower in areas with restricted visibility.

### Pedestrian traffic and other safety concerns

To better understand how to establish a speed limits on your site, consider pedestrians who are working in the vicinity of fork lift trucks, imposing lower speed limits in parts of the workplace where there is more foot traffic. Consult with staff; if pedestrians think that the fork lift trucks are being driven too fast – they probably are!

## Speed and fork lift trucks

### Speed limits

Sites should have mandatory speed limits; these may vary depending on different conditions and activities within a site. Speed limits should be managed and enforced by managers and supervisors.

### Control systems

There is equipment available that can physically control the speed of fork lift trucks. Some systems allow you to set different maximum speeds for zones of your site.

Your fork lift truck supplier or service provider should be able to advise on the various technological aids.

### Health and Safety Executive guidance

Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance **L117 Rider-operated Lift Trucks** is aimed at employers and those responsible for the safe operation of fork lift trucks, as well as those in control of worksites, the self-employed, managers and supervisors. It includes an outline of the main legal requirements relating to fork lift trucks.

**HSG136 A guide to workplace transport safety** provides advice for employers on what they need to do to comply with the law and reduce risk. It will also be useful for managers, supervisors, employees and their safety representatives, as well as contractors, vehicle operators and other organisations concerned with workplace transport safety.

The HSE Vehicles at work - speed **website** offer guidance on how to manage speed in a workplace.

---

The above information is provided by the UK Material Handling Association (UKMHA) as guidance and, where applicable, takes account of current best practice and our interpretation of current legislation. However, the UKMHA accepts no responsibility for the recommendations, advice, statements, opinions and conclusions set out above, either expressly or by implication. No warranty or representation of assurance, in respect of the accuracy or validity of the same is given.

---

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**.

**Published by UKMHA** – UK Material Handling Association

34B Kingfisher Court,  
Hambridge Road,  
Newbury,  
Berkshire RG14 5SJ

01635 277570  
[info@ukmha.org.uk](mailto:info@ukmha.org.uk)  
[www.ukmha.org.uk](http://www.ukmha.org.uk)