

Fork lift trucks and the use of mobile phones

Legislation

Since 2003, it has been a specific offence to use a hand-held mobile telephone or other hand-held device for the purpose of any interactive communication (such as messaging, making or receiving calls or accessing the internet) while driving on a public road.

A workplace environment is no less hazardous than a public road. It would therefore be good practice to ban the use of a hand-held phone or similar device whilst operating a fork lift truck.

Distraction

It is considered that the use of a hands-free mobile phone can also be a distraction. There may be an operational reason for wishing to use a hands-free mobile phone, but this is not recommended and such use should certainly be subject to risk assessment.

There are special communication systems available to assist with activities such as order picking and stock taking. Mobile phones should not be used for these types of activity.

Good Practice

It would also be good practice to ban the use of a hands-free mobile phone for personal use whilst operating a fork lift truck.

Working Platforms

The use of non-integrated working platforms on fork lift trucks requires suitable communication between the operator of the fork lift truck and the persons on the working platform. The method of communication to be used will form part of the risk assessment, but it may be that the use of hands-free mobile phones in these circumstances is considered preferable to shouting, or the use of hand signals.

Health and Safety Executive Guidance

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication **Use Lift Trucks Safely (INDG457)** states: 'Never use mobile phones or other hand-held devices while operating or travelling.'

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