

# Press Release



**March 2020**

For immediate release

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## Lift truck training vital amid COVID-19 pandemic

### Companies urged to prioritise training as forklift operators are classed as key workers

With greater focus on the nation's supply chains than ever before, operators of materials handling equipment will be key to ensuring the continued delivery of vital goods around the country over the coming weeks and months.

The Association of Industrial Truck Trainers (AITT) and RTITB (formerly the Road Transport Industry Training Board) have therefore lobbied for clarification and support from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to provide defined guidance on training during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adam Smith, Managing Director of AITT explained: "Forklift operator training is required by law and employers have a legal obligation to ensure the safety of their staff. During this time, those who supply essential items such as food and medical resources are classed as critical workers, so it is extremely important that they receive appropriate training on the equipment they are required to use.

"Conversion training may also be necessary where workers are having to change roles or work with different equipment, as businesses adapt ways of working to new circumstances. Employers must be vigilant and ensure that operators are not complacent on site. Goods are crucial right now and companies cannot risk damage and downtime caused by reckless operation."

Nick Welch, Technical Director at RTITB said: "Training for lift trucks must continue as it will help critical workers do their job safely and effectively.

"Ideally training should be on a one-to-one basis, in line with government instructions to limit gatherings to no more than two people. Instructors and trainees should also keep two metres apart and follow all Public Health England guidance. We must be realistic and consider that if training were to stop altogether, it could reduce the availability of critical forklift operators who are currently playing a key role in keeping the country moving."

Following requests by AITT and RTITB, the HSE has released a full statement containing guidance on training for rider-operated lift trucks. It addresses many key concerns, including what to do if training qualifications have recently expired.

It states:

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*“If requalification training cannot take place for reasons associated directly with coronavirus, such as closure of training facilities, unavailability of trainers/assessors or by complying with other government advice on isolation and social distancing, it may be reasonable and practicable to extend the validity of current certificates by up to 3 months.*

*“Any employer or duty holder needing to utilise this extension period should be able to state clearly their reasons for delaying requalification training and demonstrate steps they have taken to undertake the training, if required.*

*“They should also be able to demonstrate that they are meeting their legal duty to monitor and supervise lift truck drivers to ensure that they continue to operate safely. This guidance comes into effect for certificates expiring on or after 16th March 2020.*

*“To prevent accident and injury, the duty remains to ensure that staff are trained and competent to operate any industrial lift truck equipment, and this includes driver training, and the employer must be able to demonstrate that the driver is trained and competent.”*

The HSE’s full statement can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

AITT and RTITB are also working closely with partner organisations including the British Industrial Truck Association (BITA) and the Fork Lift Truck Association (FLTA) to ensure industry awareness surrounding training during this period.

Tim Waples, Chief Executive of the FLTA added: “Companies have been forced to hire more temporary workers to keep up with the demand for food and medical supplies. But forklifts are potentially dangerous pieces of machinery and there are hundreds of lift truck-related accidents every year. The current strain on the supply chain means there is high risk of operators working hastily, or untrained operators using equipment incorrectly. This could lead to accidents, and the NHS is already under extreme pressure, without them having to cope with life-changing incidents that could easily be avoided. Sufficient training will therefore be essential for enabling our supply chain to continue to run.”

For more information on forklift training contact:

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