

FORKLIFT RENTAL:

How to avoid an acrimonious ending



End-of-term contract disputes over what constitutes 'fair wear and tear' and what falls into the category of 'excessive damage' are transforming perfectly amicable relationships into full-scale financial battles. But, as FLTA Chief Executive Tim Waples explains, it needn't be so.

End-of-term discord is often caused by misunderstandings, poor communication and unreasonable expectations.

When we lease a car, we know the supplier will be punitive should the vehicle be returned in an unsatisfactory condition.

But different rules appear to apply when it comes to forklifts. Because they're robust and work in demanding circumstances we think it's okay to drive them like dodgem cars.

That's why, as a customer, you need to be aware of two things:

- 1.) You are responsible for any repairs which extend beyond normal wear and tear
- 2.) When a lift truck is damaged, it will probably cost more to fix than you might imagine

What is wear and tear?

Most rental or lease agreements extend for five years. During that time, predictable deterioration — also known as wear and tear — will naturally occur.

This reflects a truck being used in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines. But this should never be confused with damage caused by misuse or abuse.

Do fork truck companies try to cash in?

In any sector there will be suppliers who seek to cash in at the end of a contract.

That's why it's so important to work with a company that adheres to a strict Code of Practice. The FLTA Code requires members to meet defined standards of safety, efficiency and integrity. Importantly, it also insists they adhere to fair return conditions.

Where there has been misuse of a truck, however, the cost for repairs is often higher than you might expect. That's because external damage can often impact on other, more expensive components, such as hydraulic and electronic systems.

Likewise, some safety-related structures, like the overhead guard, cannot legally be repaired but must be replaced — and the cost for doing so can run into thousands of pounds.

Seats are the most abused items on lift trucks. And, although genuine wear and tear is acceptable, holes and rips are not. They are chargeable damage and fitting a replacement could cost several hundred pounds.

It's easy to see how quickly the bills can mount up...



Help is at hand

To help all parties avoid possible conflict, the FLTA has produced an authoritative and unbiased illustrated *Guide to Fair Wear and Tear*. Using real-world examples supplied by FLTA Members, it helps identify what constitutes excessive wear or damage and includes some important dos and don'ts.

The guide is available from your local FLTA member or from our online store at www.fork-truck.org.uk



Truck hire dos and don'ts

Do:

- Ensure you have a written hire agreement that you have read and understand.
- Check the truck on delivery and record any damage or deficiencies.
- Confirm that you and your rental company have a copy of the same handover certificate.

- Ensure all operators are aware of how to use and look after the truck.
- Establish and maintain a system of recorded daily or pre-shift checks.
- Deal with faults and damage as they occur. Do not allow them to deteriorate.
- Ensure your truck is serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements by allowing the rental company access to complete work when necessary.
- Make your operators and supervisors aware of the costs resulting from damage. (Consider incentivising staff to take pride in their equipment.)
- Hold regular review meetings with the rental company to monitor how things are going and what remedial action you may need to take.

Don't:

- Hire a truck on verbal agreement.
- Allow untrained personnel to operate the truck.
- Authorise the truck for use on unsuitable ground or in unsuitable areas.
- Permit overloading.
- Ignore inappropriate use of the truck.
- Neglect unwanted drips of oil and other fluids (these are symptoms of something more serious developing).
- Overlook minor scratches to bodywork. These are often tell-tale signs of careless operators who could also be damaging racking and stock and could pose a threat to pedestrians working alongside.

For more information about the FLTA, visit www.fork-truck.org.uk