

## FORKLIFT TRAINING STANDARDS:

# Are you up to speed on pallet trucks?



With Brexit now a reality, UK warehouses are operating at record capacity and, as a result, the use of pallet trucks has never been greater. But the rise in numbers has not been matched by an increase in understanding or awareness among many owners and operators. Tim Waples, Chief Executive of the FLTA explains how to specify a pallet truck that's right for your operations and sheds light on the training requirements for both operators and their employers.

The humble pallet truck is probably the most common piece of handling equipment in any warehouse... and one of the most dangerous. True, they cause few fatalities, but every year many hundreds of operators and their colleagues suffer all manner of serious injuries including strains, trapping and fractures.

## What can be done?

Let's start with the basics. When is a basic hand pallet truck sufficient for lateral handling operations and when should you consider powering up?

Mitsubishi Forklift Trucks commissioned some interesting research involving 17 different makes of hand pallet truck. It revealed that, on average, starting a 500kg load required significantly greater effort – at 23.3kg – than stipulated in official manual handling guidelines (20kg for men and 15kg for women). Increase the load to 2 tonnes and the typical force to get it in motion was a massive 49.6 kg.

That must give serious pause for thought if you are a manager or supervisor.

While there is no hard and fast rule, if your handling operations involve:

- moving loads of more than 500kg
- moving loads over long distances
- frequent use by the same person
- handling large or unpredictable loads
- working on a slope

... then it's almost certain you'll need to consider switching from a hand pallet to a powered pallet truck (PPT). Your local Fork Lift Truck Association member can offer advice and you can find your nearest member at [fork-truck.org.uk/find-members](http://fork-truck.org.uk/find-members)

## A need for training

For the remainder of this article I will focus on power pallet trucks (PPTs) since hand pallet trucks fit better within a separate discussion on manual handling. Perhaps the most pressing issue concerns training. There is a widespread belief that it simply isn't necessary to train operators of power pallet trucks and pedestrian stackers.



Nothing could be further from the truth. A powered truck, be it pedestrian, stand-on or sit-on is a potentially dangerous piece of kit: for the operators and for colleagues working on foot alongside.

Moreover under PUWER regulations it is your responsibility as an employer to ensure that staff receive suitable and sufficient training.

Since that training has been codified by the ABA (Accrediting Bodies Association) it is the benchmark against which you will be held to account in the case of an incident that is investigated by the HSE.

And the penalties for failing to train are severe. Supermarket giant Aldi was fined £1 million for "providing insufficient training" when an employee lost two toes in an accident involving a power pallet truck.

## New standards

Indeed, such is the importance of training for users of PPTs that on 1st December 2019 the ABA introduced new and tougher standards for testing the basic operating skills for pedestrian and rider pallet trucks and stackers (Category A).

The format for the new standards is based on those agreed in recent years for counterbalance trucks and is, therefore, more stringent and more consistent across all categories of equipment.

Be aware, though, that having delivered the basics you should also

provide Job Specific and Familiarisation training.

And it doesn't end there!

If you are responsible for overseeing handling operations, the law requires you to be competent, not in operating the equipment itself, but in understanding your responsibilities for upholding safety and proactively recognising and rectifying bad/unsafe practice.

Those courses are becoming more widely available and the FLTA's safety partner Mentor FLT Training and accrediting body AITT have recently launched a pioneering online course: Managing Forklift Operations.

This allows training to be carried out whenever and wherever you choose. It can also be completed over fewer total hours than a classroom-based alternative. Best of all, e-learning removes the internal logistics and costs incurred when several managers, often from differing locations attend an off-site.

For local guidance on selecting the right equipment and the training to support it visit the FLTA website to find your nearest member at [fork-truck.org.uk/find-members](http://fork-truck.org.uk/find-members) or call 01635 277577.