

FACT SHEET 26

Towing with a fork lift truck

Suitability of work equipment

Legislation in the form of Regulation 4 of [The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998](#) (PUWER) states:

Suitability of work equipment

4.—(1) Every employer shall ensure that work equipment is so constructed or adapted as to be suitable for the purpose for which it is used or provided.

(2) In selecting work equipment, every employer shall have regard to the working conditions and to the risks to the health and safety of persons which exist in the premises or undertaking in which that work equipment is to be used and any additional risk posed by the use of that work equipment.

(3) Every employer shall ensure that work equipment is used only for operations for which, and under conditions for which, it is suitable.

(4) In this regulation “suitable” means suitable in any respect which it is reasonably foreseeable will affect the health or safety of any person.

Purpose of a fork lift truck

Most fork lift trucks are not designed to tow as part of their function. If a fork lift truck is manufactured with a towing point or tow hook, these are actually to assist in the trucks removal, should it need to be recovered.

Unsuitable for towing

There are several reasons that fork lift trucks are unsuitable for towing. The primary of which is that, whilst a majority of counterbalance trucks are front wheel drive, some forklifts are rear wheel drive and their front wheels are used for braking. This makes pulling highly restrictive and can result in the operator losing control. Not only could the fork lift truck tip, but the results could be fatal.

Manufacturers specification

It is strongly recommended that a fork lift truck is not used for towing without first checking the suitability of the truck and probable restrictions, with the manufacturer.

Contact details are available for most manufacturers on the [FLTA website](#). When making contact it would be appropriate to ask for technical assistance.

Tow trucks

Many fork lift truck manufacturers also produce a range of tugs or tractors that are specifically designed for towing. If towing is part of the operational requirement then appropriate equipment should be used.

Approved Code of Practice

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance [L117 Rider-operated Lift Trucks](#) is aimed at employers and those responsible for the safe operation of lift trucks, as well as those in control of worksites, the self employed, managers and supervisors.

ACOP L117 includes an outline of the main legal requirements relating to fork lift trucks. It also includes some of the guidance from HSG6 *Safety in working with lift trucks* (and replaces HSG6), for example, information about lift truck features; guidance on the safe use of lift trucks and how to protect pedestrians; and guidance on the maintenance and thorough examination of lift trucks.

The above information is provided by the Fork Lift Truck Association (FLTA) as guidance and, where applicable, takes account of current best practice and our interpretation of current legislation.

However, the FLTA 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 fork lift 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 FLTA 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 [FLTA SAFE USER GROUP](#).

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