

Load rating of forklift trucks

The law requires work equipment to be suitable and safe for the way it is intended to be used.

Machinery manufacturers also have a legal duty to reduce risks on new machinery by ensuring it is designed and constructed to be safe. Make sure you are familiar with the features of lift trucks and ask for professional advice when necessary.

The capacity of a lift truck is important because you need to ensure it will do the work you want it to do. The size of your loads will affect the capacity you need. The actual capacity (safe working load) is the maximum load that can be carried at a set distance from the heels of the forks to a specified height. This should be stated on the lift-truck capacity plate or capacity chart. Do not load lift trucks beyond their actual capacity.

Attachments Some loads can be handled more efficiently and safely by using suitable attachments, for example fork extensions, booms, rotating heads, drum clamps, paper roll clamps, bale clamps, load stabilisers etc. Attachments, including fork extensions, will affect stability and must not be used without first seeking advice from the supplier or manufacturer. Additional training for the safe use of the attachment will be required.

Fitting an attachment will require a reduction in the actual capacity of the lift truck, called derating. Where this is necessary, only a person with appropriate knowledge and experience should carry it out. Consult the manufacturer, authorised supplier or an Accredited training provider about the suitability of an attachment for a particular lift truck and the necessary derating. A new capacity plate relating to the attachment should be applied to the lift truck before it is used with the attachment. Attachments may be mounted on the forks or directly onto the carriage. They should be securely fastened and you should make sure that the attachment or securing device does not interfere with any part of the mast structure during raising or lowering of the attachment. Always follow the instructions for using the attachment supplied by the manufacturer or authorised supplier.

All operators should be taught to understand this terminology as part of their training. If it is not understood by your operators, you should ask your fork lift truck supplier or an accredited training provider to explain what it all means. It is very important. HSE L117 ACoP, appendix 1 states that on completion of basic training, the trainee should be able to do the following;

The information in this document has been assembled and interpreted to give truck owners and users basic guidance on frequently asked questions. Responsibility for meeting the safety obligations documented rests with the employer, and Bsafe will not accept liability for any problem arising as a result of the content of this document.

3. Identify the basic construction and main components of the lift truck, stating its principles of operation and load-handling capabilities and capacities.
4. Identify, as appropriate, handling attachments which may be used with the lift truck
7. Identify various forms of load, and state the procedures for their stacking, destacking and separation; assess the weight, and, where relevant, the load centre of a load; and decide if the load with its known weight and load centre is within the truck's actual capacity (safe working load).
8. State the factors which affect machine stability, including: turning, especially the speed and sharpness of turn; load security and integrity; rated capacity and rated load centres; centres of gravity; ground conditions; and speed and smoothness of operation.