

Medical standards for forklift truck operators

Take care when selecting potential lift-truck operators.

They should be:

- reasonably fit, both physically and mentally, to safely control and operate lift trucks, with the learning ability and potential to become competent operators
- reliable, with a responsible attitude to their work;
- over the minimum school-leaving age (16), except in ports, where they must be at least 18 years old, unless they are undergoing a suitable course of training, properly supervised by a competent person. Children under 16 should never operate lift trucks

Medical considerations

People selected to operate lift trucks should be free from disabilities, either physical or psychological, that might pose a threat to their own health and safety or the safety of others who might be affected by them operating lift trucks.

Fitness for operating should always be judged on a case-by-case basis. You will need to do a risk assessment to identify any hazards associated with the job and working environment and to identify the areas of concern. Never allow anyone who is unfit because of alcohol or drugs (prescription or recreational) to drive a lift truck.

People with disabilities do not need to be excluded from work with lift trucks and may have developed skills which compensate for their disability. You should obtain medical advice about their suitability for the particular work they will be required to do. Reasonable adjustments may be required to enable some disabled people to work as lift-truck operators. The Equality Act 2010 is likely to apply.

The Drivers' Medical Unit at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) publishes *At a glance: Guide to the current medical standards of fitness to drive*. This is aimed at health professionals and applies to lift trucks on the road but can be applied to all work with lift trucks.

For most work with lift trucks, a standard of fitness equivalent to that for the Group 1 entitlement (ordinary driving licence holders) would be appropriate. Activities such as working in a particularly demanding environment, working at night or moving highly toxic or explosive materials would probably be more appropriate to the Group 2 entitlement (heavy goods vehicle licence holders)

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.

HSE is not prescriptive about the need for medical assessment for fitness to drive lift trucks and there is no legislation relating directly to this topic. However, you may choose to screen potential operators before placement and then follow the guidelines for Group 2 licences in At a glance which require medical examination every five years from age 45, and every year from age 65 (in line with licence renewal periods). Always seek medical advice where there is any doubt about a person's fitness to operate a lift truck.

It may be useful to apply a selection test to avoid wasteful attempts to instruct unsuitable trainees. Lift truck training organisations, trade associations and sector skills councils may be able to give you more advice.