

Fumes associated with forklift truck operations

In workplaces where lift trucks are powered by internal combustion engines it is important that there is adequate ventilation to remove exhaust fumes, and that the engines are properly maintained.

Exhaust fumes may be significantly reduced by using filter systems or catalytic converters. However, these systems are not a substitute for providing adequate ventilation.

Make sure exhaust filters are checked regularly to maintain their effectiveness. There may be occasions where monitoring for the presence of gases such as carbon monoxide could be helpful, either to establish if there is a problem or to make sure the control measures are adequate.

Charging batteries, including those described as maintenance free, gives off explosive hydrogen gas. If this is allowed to collect and there is a source of ignition (a naked flame or spark), then the gas and battery will explode.

When charging vehicle batteries:

- use a designated, well-ventilated area where smoking, naked flames or other ignition sources (including mobile phones) are prohibited
- keep electrical apparatus (and any other potential sources of ignition) a safe distance from the battery, but not where any electrolyte could spill onto it
- wear the appropriate PPE, for example an acid-proof apron, protective gloves and suitable eye protection.

Further information is available in the following publications, which are readily available:

- HSE Control of diesel engine exhaust emissions in the workplace HSE Code HSG187
- UKLPG Code of Practice 1 – Part 1