

Forklift truck maintenance is a legal requirement

A lack of maintenance can lead to serious accidents. It can also result in the breakdown of equipment and unscheduled stoppages to the work process.

Regulation 5 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER 98) sets out general requirements for ensuring that work equipment is kept in a suitable condition.

It focuses on three terms: 'an efficient state'; 'in efficient working order'; 'in good repair'.

To fulfil the regulation's requirements, employers have to show that they comply with all three.

Regulation 5 also covers maintenance logs. The regulation focuses on: maintaining work equipment in a suitable condition; ensuring that work logs for machinery are kept up to date.

The two parts of regulation 5 outline the general requirements for keeping work equipment and machinery in a condition which does not pose a risk to employees' safety. It highlights the employer's duty to ensure that maintenance logs are kept up to date.

Although the three terms 'an efficient state', 'in efficient working order' and 'in good repair' might appear similar, they actually set three requirements for employers.

The regulation requires people to take a broad look at the equipment to see that they have an approach in place for maintenance which is comprehensive and minimises risk.

It's not enough to put things right when they fail or break down; a number of things need to be done to minimise the possibility of such incidents occurring in the first place.

The correct approach to maintenance involves looking at all aspects of the equipment, not just those that might be thought of as the critical parts. The ACOP to regulation 5 suggests how this can be achieved through: routine maintenance and planned preventive maintenance. It also suggests the kinds of measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of equipment failure and any risks to employees' safety that could result.

Always follow the manufacturer's or authorised supplier's instructions on inspection, maintenance and servicing. You should make sure there is: a documented pre-shift check; a system for reporting defects and ensuring remedial work is carried out; a planned routine maintenance system; a periodic thorough examination and regular safety inspection.

Thorough and regular planned maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations in the vehicle handbook helps to ensure lift trucks operate safely and efficiently and can identify problems before they become an issue. Most lift trucks are maintained on an 'hours run' regime.

Consult the manufacturer for maintenance regimes on seldom-used trucks. Maintenance in addition to the recommendations in the handbook may be required where trucks operate in unusually harsh (for example corrosive) environments.

Guidance on this can be provided by the fork truck dealer who provided the equipment. The time interval between the various services and inspections will vary according to the intensity of use and the working environment.

Fork lift trucks are regarded as “plant” for maintenance purposes and time intervals are recorded in hours. For convenience your dealer will translate this into months to determine the planned dates for maintenance activity. If you use hired fork lift trucks you must allow the hire company regular access to the equipment for maintenance.

Only allow qualified, competent personnel to carry out maintenance work. Operators, unless suitably qualified, competent and authorised, should not carry out repairs and adjustments to lift trucks. There is no legal requirement to keep a record of maintenance checks, but it is highly advisable that you do.

Keeping a maintenance log will allow you to identify recurring trends and problems and provides evidence that the company is meeting its legal obligations.