

The legal requirements for forklift truck operator training

HSE publication L117 (Rider-operator lift trucks: Approved Code of Practice and guidance) advises on the basic training of lift-truck operators.

To comply with your duties under regulation 9 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and general duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, you as an employer must ensure that all operators you employ, both new and existing, are adequately trained and, when necessary, provide additional or refresher training.

Regulation 9 of PUWER states:

(1) Every employer shall ensure that all persons who use work equipment have received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods which may be adopted when using the work equipment, any risks which such use may entail and precautions to be taken.

(2) Every employer shall ensure that any of his employees who supervises or manages the use of work equipment has received adequate training for purposes of health and safety, including training in the methods which may be adopted when using the work equipment, any risks which such use may entail and precautions to be taken.'

Under the Health & Safety At Work Act, you, as an employer, have to ensure – as far as reasonably practical – the health and safety of yourself and others who may be affected by what you do (or don't do). The Law requires that lift truck operators are trained.

Operator training should always include three stages:

Basic training needs to fully cover the skills and knowledge needed to safely operate the type of lift truck and handling attachments (if any) the trainee will be required to use, including being aware of the risks from lift-truck operations. As well as those directly related to the operation of trucks, include associated tasks, such as the hazards associated with refuelling.

Operators with some experience of lift trucks or relevant experience of similar vehicles may need less extensive training than those with no experience, however, do not overestimate the value of such experience. An operator with basic training on one type of lift truck or handling attachment cannot safely operate others, on which they have not been trained, without additional conversion training.

The ability to drive private cars or other conventional road vehicles, for example, does not remove the need for proper training on lift trucks, which have very different controls and stability and handling characteristics.

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.

Specific job training is a further essential element of training. It will normally follow the completion of basic training but may be combined or integrated with it. It will be tailored to the employer's particular needs and covers the use of the forklift in the employer's specific operational environment.

Familiarisation training is the third stage of training. This should be carried out on the job and under close supervision, by someone with appropriate knowledge and covers any other feature of the work which it is not practicable to teach off the job.