

Examining safety



Gerry Simpson, of Barloworld Handling, talks about the importance of lift truck Thorough Examinations.

There is no doubt that safety should be the first priority in every workplace but it is a particularly important consideration where forklift trucks are in operation. The HSE reports over 2,000 forklift truck related accidents every year in the UK and many of these could be a result of faulty equipment. In order to minimise risks and comply with health and safety regulations, employers must ensure their lift trucks undergo a thorough examination at least once a year and that the examination is independent of the normal servicing regime.

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Unfortunately there still appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding amongst many employers towards Thorough Examinations. It is in fact, illegal to own, lease or operate a forklift truck that does not have a valid certificate of Thorough Examination. What's more, the legislation states that it is the responsibility of the truck operator, not the rental company or service provider, to ensure their lift trucks have a valid certificate.

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the same as an automotive MOT, a means of monitoring and maintaining the safety of the vehicle, although the checks are far more rigorous. As well as checking steering, tyres and brakes it also covers all lifting components, hydraulics, the mast and carriage, chains and chain retaining bolts and forks. Measurements are taken to identify wear and damage to any components that may compromise safety and to check that previously reported faults have been repaired.

Without a Thorough Examination certificate, employers run the risk of prosecution and invalidation of insurance in the event of an accident. For instance, if a faulty chain is used in operation, the chain could snap or come loose while moving a loaded pallet, resulting in serious injury. The Thorough Examination is designed to help identify potential problems before they occur by spotting damage, wear and faults to critical components.

To ensure all relevant components are checked and the vehicle is safe and legal, the examinations must be completed by a competent person – ideally a qualified engineer. A couple of years ago the FLTA and BITA joined forces to create Consolidated Forklift Truck Services (CFTS), an organisation to accredit companies that are qualified to carry out Thorough Examinations. CFTS accredited companies such as Barloworld

Handling, which has 600 engineers in the UK, have to ensure their engineers are trained and follow a procedural code to ensure Thorough Examinations are consistent and performed to a high standard. The CFTS kite-mark gives employers the peace of mind that their trucks have been examined to HSE guidelines.

Whilst all lift trucks must undergo a Thorough Examination at least every 12 months, trucks that are worked intensively or carry special attachments may require examinations more regularly and equipment involved in the lifting of people is legally bound to have a Thorough Examination every six months. Your Thorough Examinations provider will be able to give advice.

If all this sounds like yet another costly exercise and more red tape, employers will be pleased to know, in addition to improving safety, regular Thorough Examinations are very straightforward, can be arranged with very little impact on daily operations and can actually save you money in the long run by reducing the cost of repairs, damage and vehicle downtime. A Thorough Examination is an investment in equipment but more importantly it is an investment in safety. Accidents that occur in industry due to poorly maintained equipment are inexcusable and employers have both a moral and legal obligation to support health and safety processes. ●