



IS FORKLIFT TRUCK TRAINING TRANSFERABLE?

Introduction

There is a perception that if an employee is trained to drive one type of forklift truck (FLT) then it would be considered sufficient training. However, this is not the case.

For instance, if an employee is required to operate an articulated forklift then the fact that they have a counterbalance licence is not sufficient training. Instead they would need to undertake a conversion course by an appropriately trained trainer, irrespective of how many years' experience they may have. This is because articulated forklifts are a completely different concept to counter balanced trucks and there are very significant stability issues that must be brought out in the theory training. There have been some very serious accidents in the past due to the misuse of these types of forklifts, particularly due to the lack of training, one of which resulted in a fatality so it is important to get it right.

In this instance the conversion training would need to be a one-day course by an appropriately competent trainer. This type training is mainly one-on-one - if the trainer has more people on the course its length would need to be extended. Following the conversion training the operator would need a separate certificate to prove that they have been trained on an articulated forklift.

If the training is delivered in-house, then the trainer will need to be accredited to RTITB standards or the equivalent and have received specific tuition to become a trainer on the relevant type of truck.

Once an in-house tutor is officially trained in this area it is for the employer to decide the best approach to bring the documented training up to date with current operatives using the equipment. Additionally, a training plan should be drawn up. Furthermore, a risk assessment of the operations will need to be undertaken which will identify any specific re-training needs.

To ensure that the operator is fully competent and aware of current principles, refresher training will need to be given at intervals suitable to the needs and capabilities of the operator. Employers should determine suitable intervals using performance monitoring and assessment. There is no legislative requirement governing the frequency of this refresher training, but the accredited training establishment providing the initial training should be able to advise this. A common interval for requalification is three years, but this will depend on the specific circumstances of operators.

Refresher training will normally be required under one or more of the following conditions:

If an operator's competence or safety performance gives cause for concern.

If the operator is an infrequent user, eg electrician, who may only drive for a short period (eg six times a year).

If a variant of the truck or handling attachment is introduced or some other significant changes takes place in the operator's working conditions.

If a trained and experienced operator who has not operated a forklift truck for some time is about to take up full-time fork lift truck operation.

Please contact Simon Brentnall at simonbrentnall@bfff.co.uk for any further information.





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