



Safety Bulletin

Forklift Safety – best practice is more than a licence

Forklift operation is classified as 'high risk work' under Work Health and Safety legislation (in effect in most jurisdictions from 1 January 2012) and as such, forklift drivers must possess a high-risk work licence. However, employers should consider that holding a licence is not necessarily a sign of competency and a best practice approach ought to be adopted.

Here are some guidance notes from the consultancy on best practice relating to operating forklifts in workplaces.



Context – high-risk work

High-risk work encompasses scaffolding, dogging and rigging, crane and hoist operation including boom type elevated work platforms (EWPs), reach stackers (intermodal shipping container handling), pressure equipment operation and the operation of forklifts. The focus of this article is on forklift safety.

Training and licensing

Training for high-risk work can only be carried out by an approved Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Approved by WorkCover NSW, RTOs can deliver training and arrange a licence assessment for high-risk work licences in NSW. The outcome of such training is for a forklift driver to be competent in the basic skills and standard procedures. A three-day course is usually involved in obtaining a forklift licence. (Check your states authority body for more information).

Why a licence is not enough

Being competent in a basic sense means just that — basic operations; and, as a result, if a different vehicle is driven from that used in training, issues can arise. Similarly training cannot prepare a driver for the particular idiosyncrasies of a given workplace or the special needs of a particular warehouse or loading dock. This work environment is where the need for more training and focused workplace training is critical.

Who pays for the licence?

Some awards and agreements may specify who is responsible for paying for a licence and, in such cases, that regulation would settle the matter. It should be noted that businesses do not apply for licences on behalf of their workers — instead, a person must apply for his/her own licence.

In-house training

In the case of forklift drivers, persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) need to ensure these workers are familiar with the workplace, as well as the particular brand and type of forklift they will be operating. Forklift training should also be given due attention by the PCBU when assessing relevant workplace risks. PCBUs can further support their forklift drivers with in-house training by a 'competent' person'. A proper training regime would also include a timetable for review of competencies, as well as refresher training on an annual basis. In addition, accurate records should be kept so that the measures put in place can be demonstrated to an inspector.

Information for this article was sourced from <http://workplaceohs.com.au>. For further forklift safety information contact MLA Holdings on 131 652 or www.mlaholdings.com.au