

FACT SHEET 22

FUMES ASSOCIATED WITH FORK LIFT TRUCK OPERATIONS

The operation of fork lift trucks in confined spaces may generate dangerous levels of poisonous fumes. As important as this is there is no easy way to detect what is going on, especially if work patterns vary. It is therefore very important that risks are understood.

Diesel engines may produce white smoke, especially when cold. Excessive blue or black smoke may indicate that maintenance is required. But even when the smoke is almost invisible it will contain carcinogenic substances. Obvious health issues may include eye irritation or respiratory problems. Further information is available in the following publication which is readily available from HSE Books (Telephone 01787 881165).

Control of diesel engine exhaust emissions in the workplace
HSE Code HSG187
ISBN: 978 0 7176 6306 4
Price £8.95

LPG engines produce carbon dioxide and water vapour. In areas of poor ventilation, or if the engine has not been properly serviced, toxic carbon monoxide may be produced. This may result in death or unconsciousness. Particular care needs to be taken in the back of lorries or containers or in poorly ventilated buildings with low ceilings. Further advice should be available through your LPG supplier. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that LPG engines need to be serviced by an LPG trained engineer in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Charging facilities for electric trucks will produce potentially explosive gases. Advice on ventilation should be available from your battery supplier.

The solution to all of these problems rests with adequate ventilation. For low intensity operations a few open windows may be sufficient. High intensity operations may require fans or extraction equipment. Whatever the circumstance, a risk assessment should be carried out and implemented. If in doubt then professional advice should be available through a Local Authority Environmental Health Office.

The information in this Fact Sheet has been assembled and interpreted to give truck owners and users basic guidance on frequently asked questions. Further important information will be given in the quoted reference documents. Responsibility for meeting the safety obligations discussed rests with the employer, and the FLTA will not accept liability for any problem arising as a result of the content of this document. **Technical Bulletins, containing more detailed information and updated as appropriate, are made available free to members of the [FLTA SAFE USER GROUP](#).**

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