

FACT SHEET 05

What is the maximum gradient for a fork lift truck?

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) 5 16 PUWER applies to all work equipment.

The Regulations require that:

- work equipment is suitable for the purpose it is used or provided for, and is properly maintained and inspected at suitable intervals
- where the use of work equipment is likely to involve specific risks, the use, maintenance etc of that equipment is restricted to people given the task of using and/or maintaining it
- users, supervisors and managers have received adequate training for the purposes of health and safety, including:
 - training in the methods which may be adopted when using work equipment
 - any risks which such use may entail precautions to take.

Your specification when choosing a workplace vehicle should include answers to the following questions:

- What are the dimensions of the load it will carry?
 - height
 - weight
 - width
- How will loads be secured?
- How far will the vehicle travel?
- What terrain will the vehicle be driven on?
- In what conditions will the vehicle be used, for example:
 - In a confined space (where an electric model may be more suitable)
 - In extremes of heat or cold? And will this affect the operation of the vehicle and/or the driver's ability to control the vehicle?

It is therefore essential that when selecting a fork lift truck, it is specified and capable of operating on the gradients you have in your workplace.

Try to eliminate gradients where possible.

Never allow lift trucks to be driven up or down gradients that exceed the maximum specified by the manufacturer or authorised supplier.

Do not allow travelling or turning across a gradient in a lift truck.

All lift-truck operating areas should be suitably designed and properly maintained.

Make sure the surfaces used by lift trucks are as level and firm as possible, and preferably surfaced with concrete or other suitable material. Some lift trucks, however, are designed to operate on rough or uneven surfaces.

Take account of the following:

- Repair potholes and remove accumulations of loose material on the ground as they are particularly hazardous to small-wheeled lift trucks. Remember, road humps are unsuitable for lift trucks. If they are used to reduce the speed of other traffic, provide a bypass for lift trucks.
- Specific job training in addition to basic training. Specific job training is a further essential element of training. It will normally follow the completion of basic training. When operating fork lifts on a gradient, the elements of specific job training that must be taken into consideration are use of the lift truck in conditions that the operator will meet at work, such as:
 - Gangways
 - Loading bays
 - Racking
 - Lifts
 - Automatic doors
 - Confined areas
 - Cold stores
 - Slopes
 - Rough terrain
 - Loading platforms
 - Other vehicles

- Bad weather

In addition, it should include instruction on site rules, for example site layout; one-way systems; speed limits; general emergency procedures and safe systems of work.

Whilst operating on a slope, always: travel slowly when going down slopes; when carrying a load, ensure the forks face uphill when travelling up or down slopes; without a load, ensure the forks face downhill when travelling up or down slopes; adjust the tilt (where fitted) to suit the gradient and raise the forks to clear the ground.

Never:

- attempt to turn on or travel across a ramp or a slope
- leave a lift truck on a gradient except in an emergency, in which case always chock the wheels.

See L117, Rider-operated lift trucks: Approved Code of Practice and Guidance for further guidance.

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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