

FACT SHEET 21

Version 2

CLEANING A FORK LIFT TRUCK

Many fork lift trucks operate in a clean dry area and require little cleaning - if any. Some operate in dusty or muddy conditions or with loads that shed fibres or grains of material whilst in transit. These trucks require special attention.

Fork lift trucks have chains, cylinders, valves and seals, all of which are vulnerable to the ingress of dirt of any description. This dirt will cause such components to deteriorate and fail prematurely. Premature failure leads to disruptive unscheduled maintenance and extra cost. In addition, trucks that operate with or around corrosive materials will be exposed to possible damage to these components as well as the chassis, bodywork, cab etc.

Keeping the truck clean will reduce the exposure to risk. However, inappropriate cleaning may make the problem worse. The main areas that need to be considered are detailed below.

- Do not steam clean or power wash chains. The chains need to retain their lubrication. If they are cleaned care should be taken to ensure that the windscreen is not contaminated.
- Bearings, seals, gaiters and anything electrical are not designed for close contact with high pressure or steam cleaning equipment. Keep nozzles a good distance away.
- The sidewalls of pneumatic tyres can be damaged or weakened by high pressure water, especially if it is heated. Strong soaps may also cause damage.
- Substances that may be impossible to remove once hard or set, such as cement, and corrosive substances, such as salt, should be washed off as soon as possible after contact has been made.

This Fact Sheet does not cover the environmental issues that will arise from the cleaning of fork lift trucks. Contaminants will be produced and advice should be sought from the local Environmental Health Office. In addition there will be a requirement for the cleaner to wear PPE appropriate to the equipment being used. There may also be electrical safety issues to be considered.

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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