

# Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions

## Aim

The aim of this bulletin is to provide members of the UK Material Handling Association (UKMHA) with answers to commonly asked questions in relation to Thorough Examination of forklift trucks.

This bulletin is particularly targeted at providing answers to users of forklift trucks, not directed at fork lift truck companies. It is written in the form of questions and answers.

## Questions

### 1. What is a Thorough Examination?

Simply put, a Thorough Examination for fork lift trucks is roughly equivalent to the MOT for cars – a legally required examination to ensure that the machine is in safe working order.

Specifically, a Thorough Examination is a statutory requirement for lifting equipment (including fork lift trucks) under **The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998** (LOLER), Regulation 9. It's a systematic and detailed examination, so that deterioration can be detected in sufficient time to allow remedial action to be taken. Carried out at specified intervals, or following certain events, conducted by a competent person, who must then complete a written report.

It is just as important as a MOT – probably more so!

A report of Thorough Examination identifies the state of the equipment at the time of the examination. If applicable, it identifies defects found and where appropriate, specific timescales that defects must be rectified within.

There is a legal requirement for a Thorough Examination to be carried out at least once a year and often more frequently, depending on conditions of use. See question 12 for more details.

### 2. What is a LOLER inspection?

The term LOLER inspection is sometimes incorrectly used to describe a Thorough Examination. It is used because LOLER is the shortened version of "Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations", which is the legislation that mandates the Thorough Examination of fork lift trucks.

### 3. What is a safety inspection?

Safety inspection is used to describe a combined Thorough Examination under LOLER and other inspection requirements under **The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998** (PUWER), Regulation 6.

It should be remembered that Thorough Examination run alongside necessary inspection, maintenance and pre-use checks – not in place of them.

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### Questions (cont)

#### 4. Is a Thorough Examination a legal requirement, like the MOT for cars?

Yes. Thorough Examination it is a legal requirement under The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER).

#### 5. What does a Thorough Examination involve, what is examined?

The extent of the Thorough Examination required will depend on the potential risk from the lifting equipment. Including all matters which affect the safety of the lifting equipment, plus likely deterioration with time.

A Thorough Examination may require some disassembly or internal examination of parts. A Thorough Examination may include:

- Visual examination
- Functional checks
- Measurements of wear
- In some cases, further NDT (non-destructive testing) and load testing may be recommended

Items such as those listed below are examined during a Thorough Examination under LOLER:

- Forks
- Carriage
- Load backrest
- Chains
- Mast
- Tilt mechanism
- Hydraulic System
- Rating plate
- Lifting controls
- Attachments or side shift if fitted

The intensity of examination - and the time taken – is much greater than in a MOT.

#### 6. What does a Thorough Examination involve, what is examined?

Thorough Examination must be conducted by a Competent Person, although the term 'competent person' is not defined in law. However, the Health & Safety

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Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice and guidance for LOLER, L113 – **Safe Use of Lifting Equipment** (paragraph 294 on competent persons) states that:

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### **Questions (cont)**

*'You should ensure that the person carrying out a thorough examination has such appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the lifting equipment to be thoroughly examined as will enable them to detect defects or weaknesses and to assess their importance in relation to the safety and continued use of the lifting equipment.'*

For most practical purposes there are 3 types of person who may carry out a Thorough Examination. Their titles may vary from those stated below:

- An experienced forklift truck service engineer.
- An insurance company lifting equipment examiner.  
Insurance companies often refer to their examiners as 'engineer surveyors'
- An examiner from a specialist inspection company.

The UKMHA firmly believe that a forklift truck service engineer with a minimum of 5 years experience is best placed to conduct Thorough Examinations. Provided their company has a management system that ensures they have attended an approved training course and periodic revalidation, instruction, supervision, quality control, independence, impartiality and integrity.

### **7. Who is responsible for making sure that a fork lift truck has a current report of Thorough Examination?**

The employer of the fork lift truck operator has the responsibility to ensure that the machine has a current report of Thorough Examination. Under Health and Safety legislation the employer has a duty of care and must ensure that the forklift trucks their operators use are safe and suitable.

Where the employer is the owner of the forklift truck this duty is clear; the employer must arrange a regular Thorough Examination schedule, appropriate to the forklift truck and its use. Thorough Examination is to be carried out at least once a year and often more frequently, depending on conditions of use. See question 11 for more details.

During short term hire (i.e. less than 12 months) the provider of a hired forklift truck has a legal duty to provide appropriate physical evidence that a Thorough Examination has been carried out. The employer of the operator also has a duty to ensure equipment is safe for use and are Thoroughly Examined at the appropriate intervals.

However, when hire exceeds 12 months it becomes the sole responsibility of the employer of the operator.

It is important for both the hire company and the employer of the operator to agree and confirm who will carry out safety-related maintenance and Thorough Examinations. The employer will need to ensure that necessary inspections and pre-use checks are carried out and defects reported and remedied as necessary. A copy of the last report of Thorough Examination must accompany the fork lift truck and be available for inspection.

## **Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Questions (cont)**

#### **8. What should a report of Thorough Examination contain?**

Law makes it quite clear; a report of Thorough Examination must contain all of the information specified in **Schedule 1 of LOLER**.

#### **9. Can my own engineer carry out a Thorough Examination?**

This is a question often asked by companies that own forklift trucks and use their own engineers to service them, along with other plant equipment, vans etc.

The answer below is not directed at forklift truck dealers and similar companies.

Probably not, as your staff are unlikely to satisfy the Competent Person requirements for the purposes of Thorough Examination. In the same way that your engineers, who service your vehicles are unlikely to be qualified to MOT them.

Also, there are a number of important issues here.

- Someone, who is competent to do so, must authorise the individual as a Competent Person for the purpose of conducting Thorough Examinations.
- The Competent Person must have appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the lifting equipment, the ability to apply it when detecting defects or weaknesses and assess how important they are in relation to the safety and continued use of the lifting equipment.
- The UKMHA recommends a minimum of 5 years experience as a fork lift truck service engineer and successful completion of approved Thorough Examination training. Further, we recommend revalidation of that training be repeated every 5 years.
- The Competent Person must also be sufficiently independent and impartial to allow objective decisions to be made without fear or favour.
- LOLER does not expressly preclude the person that services forklift trucks from also conducting the Thorough Examination of that equipment.

#### **10. If the forklift truck does not have a seat belt will it recorded as a defect during the Thorough Examination?**

Not necessarily. For example, most reach trucks and machines with stand-on operators do not need to have a seat belt fitted, so it does not apply.

In certain circumstances older counterbalance forklift trucks may still be used without a seat belt, but such use should be risk assessed.

For further information read the UKMHA Technical Bulletin 01 and or the HSE **Information Sheet MISC241**.

## Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions

### Questions (cont)

#### 11. How often is a Thorough Examination required?

Law (LOLER) requires that Thorough Examination be conducted on a periodic basis.

You should either have lifting equipment Thoroughly Examined at intervals no longer than those specified in **LOLER Regulation 9(3)**, or shorter intervals if the Competent Person considers this appropriate. Alternatively, in accordance with the intervals specified in an examination scheme for the equipment.

The UKMHA agree with the recommendations on intervals for periodic Thorough Examination, made in the British Industrial Truck Association (BITA) **guidance note GN28**, which are shown below in Table 1. These recommendations have been issued to HSE Inspectors.

Lifting equipment shall be subject to Thorough Examination before reintroduction into service following any exceptional event (e.g. overloading, accidents, incidents, impacts, change of use etc) which is liable to jeopardise the safety of the machine.

TABLE 1	
MINIMUM INTERVAL BETWEEN EXAMINATIONS	OPERATING CIRCUMSTANCES
12 Months	Any forklift truck working up to 40 hours per week
12 Months	Any forklift truck working up to 40 hours per week permanently fitted with attachments
6 Months	Any forklift truck used for elevating persons, no matter how infrequent. (Mandatory)
6 Months	Demountable forklift trucks
6 Months	Any attachment not permanently fitted to a forklift truck
6 Months	Any forklift truck working between 40 and 80 hours per week
4 Months	Any forklift truck working in excess of 80 hours per week
4 Months	Any forklift truck working in arduous conditions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine environments</li> <li>• Corrosive chemical environments</li> <li>• Metal manufacturing or processing</li> <li>• Cement/aggregate processing, or where abrasive particles are present</li> <li>• Brine processes</li> <li>• Cold stores</li> </ul>
Note: When an attachment is permanently fitted to a truck the attachment will be Thoroughly Examined as though it were part of that truck, at the same time interval as that truck.	

## **Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Questions (cont)**

#### **12. What happens if a Thorough Examination finds a defect?**

A report of Thorough Examination will identify any defects found and where appropriate, state a timescale by which they must be rectified. The employer of the operator is responsible for ensuring that the necessary rectifications are made within that timescale. The forklift truck is to be removed from service, if defects are not rectified within the timescale specified in the report of Thorough Examination.

If defects are imminently dangerous, the report will state that the equipment must not be used until they have been rectified.

If there are no defects, a report of Thorough Examination will still be issued. A report of Thorough Examination must be issued after every examination regardless of outcome.

#### **13. If there are defects in our fork lift truck, will the Competent Person report us to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)?**

Not normally. However, there is a legal requirement under LOLER for the Competent Person to send a copy of the report of Thorough Examination to the relevant enforcing authority in certain situations. This applies where there is, in the opinion of the Competent Person, any existing defect or imminent failure of a safety critical element associated with the lifting parts of the equipment which poses a danger to persons or serious personal injury. See UKMHA Technical Bulletin 08.

#### **14. What is likely to happen after a report of Thorough Examination has been sent to the relevant enforcement authority?**

In most cases, the relevant enforcement authority may simply follow-up with a phone call to the forklift truck user, to ask if the defects reported on the report of Thorough Examination have received attention, they may also request evidence to back this up. It is extremely rare for the equipment user to receive a site visit from an enforcement authority following the submission of a single adverse inspection report.

#### **15. Should our forklift truck have a certificate similar to what was once issued with a MOT?**

No. There is no legal requirement for a certificate. However, a Competent Person on completion of a Thorough Examination must produce a report. You are required to keep this report of Thorough Examination safe, at least until the next examination.

The Competent Person who performs the next Thorough Examination may ask to see the last report. Safety inspectors and enforcement officers may also request to see it.

## **Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Questions (cont)**

#### **16. We have a maintenance contract with a local forklift truck company – will this include the Thorough Examination?**

Probably not. Thorough Examination is not part of the maintenance schedule, it is a separate legally required examination. You may have a contract that includes it, but it may be stated separately and agreed as an additional item.

If you look at the answer to question 9 you will see that different types of people can carry out a Thorough Examination. You may decide that a fork lift truck company carries out maintenance, while Thorough Examination is conducted by a specialist inspection company.

#### **17. Can't the Thorough Examination and service be done all together? It would be quicker and cheaper!**

No. The Thorough Examination is a specific legal requirement that must be completed independent of a servicing. Servicing activity can be conducted during the same visit, but the Thorough Examination must be carried out and documented first. Once the report of Thorough Examination has been issued to the operator's representative, servicing activities can be undertaken.

#### **18. How long should a typical Thorough Examination take?**

It's not possible to standardise the time taken for a Thorough Examination, therefore it must not be limited to any particular timescale. The UKMHA believes 45 minutes should be the minimum time taken even for small fork lift trucks.

#### **19. I only use my forklift truck for 10 minutes each week, surely it doesn't need a Thorough Examination?**

You are wrong.

The legal requirement for Thorough Examination apply to all forklift trucks, no matter how infrequently they are used.

#### **20. Why isn't there a fixed fee for Thorough Examination, like a car's MOT fee?**

Unlike a car, a forklift truck cannot easily be taken to a testing centre, so the examiner must come to the machine. The distance and time involved in travelling, must be reflected in the price of a Thorough Examination.

The time taken for the Thorough Examination will depend upon the type of machine being examined and will take much longer than a typical MOT, also the forklift truck will be examined at a much greater intensity than a car. Forklift trucks are more diverse and complex in construction than the average car, so it's not possible to standardise the time taken for a Thorough Examination. Again, this affects the cost to the examiner and hence the cost to the customer.

Like a MOT the price quoted will be for the examination and associated documentation, not any repair that may be necessary.

## Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions

### Questions (cont)

#### 21. Is there a legal requirement to inspect the non-lifting parts of a forklift trucks?

Yes. Regulation 6 of **The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998** (PUWER), requires all work equipment that is exposed to conditions causing deterioration which may result in dangerous situations to be inspected.

The forklift truck industry's major trade association, the UK Material Handling Association (UKMHA) advocate that lifting equipment should be subject to a safety inspection. Which is a combination of examination under LOLER Regulation 9 and inspection under PUWER Regulation 6, this ensures the whole machine has been assessed.

#### 22. What about demountable fork lift trucks?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have advised that demountable machines. (i.e. those that are stowed on the rear chassis of a lorry) should be Thoroughly Examined every 6 months. Unless it can be shown that the operator is not riding on the machine when it is being mounted or demounted.

#### 23. We use hand-pallet trucks, Thorough Examination can't apply to them too?

Low lift pallet trucks, i.e. non-stacking pallet trucks and low lift trucks that lift not more than 300mm from the ground do not require Thorough Examination under LOLER. This exclusion also includes those with an operator platform that elevates up to 900mm from the ground.

However, in order to comply with PUWER, these types of equipment require an inspection of all safety-related parts which are necessary for their safe operation. Equipment must be inspected at suitable intervals, and after every event liable to jeopardise its safety. The frequency of inspection should be determined through risk assessment and may vary, depending on environmental conditions, for example equipment subject to harsh outdoor conditions is likely to need more frequent inspections than if used in an indoor environment.

The results of such inspections must be recorded and retained at least until the next inspection. There is no set format for such records and standard work sheets used by fork truck companies should be adequate, if they contain the items listed below:

- (a) information on the type and model of equipment;
- (b) any identification mark or number;
- (c) its normal location;
- (d) the date that the inspection was carried out;
- (e) who carried out the inspection;
- (f) any faults;
- (g) any action taken;
- (h) to whom the faults have been reported;
- (i) the date when repairs or other necessary action were carried out



## Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions

### Questions (cont)

#### 24. What about sideshifts?

##### Permanently Attached Sideshifts

If the sideshift is permanently attached to the forklift truck, then it can be treated as though it is part of the machine. This means that the frequency of Thorough Examination should be the same as the forklift truck to which it is attached.

A sideshift may be considered permanently attached if the bottom hangers are bolted in position and an engineer would be required to remove and refit the equipment.

##### Unattached Sideshifts

If the sideshift is not permanently attached to the forklift truck, then it should be treated as a lifting accessory and have a Thorough Examination every 6 months, or in accordance with an examination scheme.

#### 25. If I want to read more about this subject what should I read?

Meeting the requirements of LOLER and PUWER would be assisted by adherence to the HSEs Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and guidance for:

- LOLER – **L113 Safe use of lifting equipment.**
- PUWER – **L22 Safe use of work equipment.**

While ACOPs L113 and L22 are not law, they have been produced under section 16 of the **Health and Safety at Work etc Act**. 1974 and have special status.

The UK Material Handling Association (UKMHA) Guidance Note – GN 28 Thorough examination & safety inspections of industrial lift trucks – is available to purchase **here**.

#### 26. What is Consolidated Fork Truck Services (CFTS)?

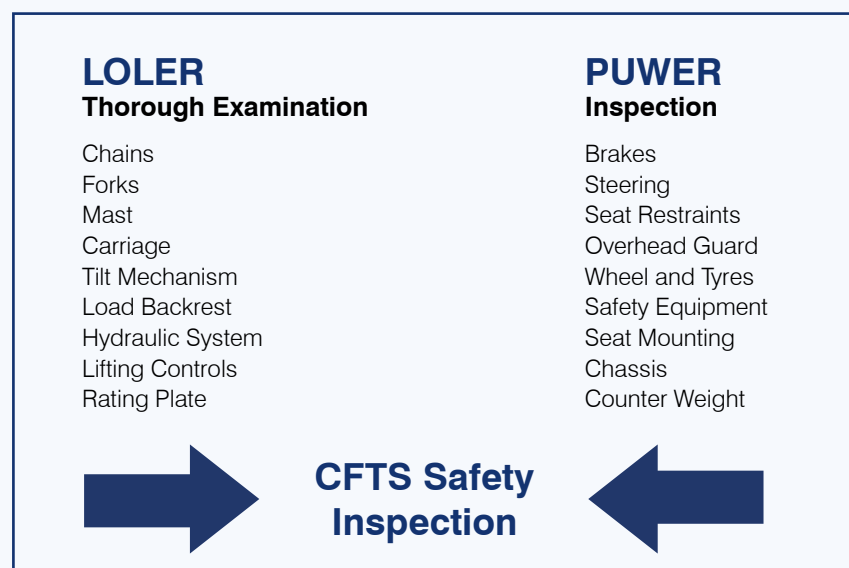
The forklift truck industry's major trade association, the UK Material Handling Association (UKMHA) give clear, definitive procedures and consistent, high national standards for the combined Thorough Examination and inspection of forklift trucks.

The result is Consolidated Fork Truck Services (CFTS). Which is the only national accreditation scheme, that authorizes examiners and inspection companies to conduct a documented combined Thorough Examination under LOLER and inspection under PUWER. This combined activity is known as a CFTS safety inspection and ensures that the entire forklift truck has been checked in a single activity.

The relationship that the CFTS safety inspection has to the corresponding legislation is shown on page 11. (Note this is for illustration purposes only and is not an exhaustive list.)

## Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions

### Questions (cont)



### 27. I would like some of my staff to understand more about what is involved with Thorough Examination. How can I do this?

The UKMHA offers Thorough Examination Managers courses, which might be more effective than expecting your staff to read the various regulations. Course information and bookings can be made via the UKMHA website [here](#), or contact the UKMHA office.

### 28. How do I find CFTS accredited companies?

An up-to-date register of accredited companies and examiners, that are currently delivering the CFTS national scheme of combined Thorough Examination and inspection is available from the CFTS website [here](#).

To help find the most appropriate company, the register is broken down into national and local providers by region.

### 29. How can I arrange for my experienced forklift truck service engineers to undergo the training necessary for them to carry out Thorough Examinations under the CFTS scheme?

Details of all CFTS courses are published on the UKMHA website [here](#). Bookings for all courses can be made online or through the Association office.

It should be noted that the CFTS Thorough Examination course is only part of the training requirement. It does not qualify an engineer to be a Competent Person under the requirements of LOLER. That decision can only be made by their employer.

## **Thorough Examination of Forklift Trucks – Some Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Questions (cont)**

#### **30. Can my insurance/inspection company insist that its own inspectors carry out the Thorough Examinations on my forklift trucks?**

No. Insurance/inspection companies have no legal right to insist that their own inspectors carry out your Thorough Examinations. You are perfectly at liberty to make your own arrangements.

#### **31. What if I have more questions?**

You can call the UKMHA office and ask, if the staff don't have the answer to hand, they will soon find out and let you know.

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The information in this Technical Bulletin has been assembled and interpreted to give forklift 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 UKMHA will not accept liability for any problem arising as a result of the content of this document. Fact Sheets, containing abridged information on a variety of subjects are made available from the UKMHA website [here](#).

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