

Introduction

Until recently, workplace vehicle operations had their own health standard dictated by HSE. In more recent time, HSE have decided that health decisions that dictate suitability to drive lift fork trucks and other vehicles be brought into line with DVLA standards for driving cars.

Except where there is an additional risk, such as moving particularly dangerous loads, this standard now applies, as it does for other duties such as remote pendant crane operations, tug driving and other forms of driving duties that do not include buses, coaches, lorries or heavy plant.

Medical Considerations

The following are some of the criteria that prospective drivers' health may be compared to when assessing fitness to undertake driving duties:

Suitability

Being barred from driving cars on medical grounds will usually entail suspension of workplace driving duties for the extent of the DVLA driving suspension. A minimum age of 17 years is recommended, along with a sensible and mature attitude.

Vision

6/12 measured on the Snellen scale (with spectacles or contact lenses, if necessary) using both eyes together or, if you have sight in one eye only, in that eye alone. You must also have an adequate field of vision.

BP and circulatory disorders

Your blood pressure must be well controlled and consistently below 180/110 (ideally, for general health reason, it should be much lower). If you suffer with cardiac problems, these must be discussed with the practitioner who may need to seek further advice. A single, simple heart attack, for example, should not bar an employee from FLT operations. DVLA guidance for driving cars will apply.

Hearing

The ability to hear instructions and warning signals is important. The use of a hearing aid is acceptable. Assessment of the working environment, materials being handled, and other duties associated with the work should be undertaken on an individual basis if a problem is identified.

Epilepsy and other conditions that may cause loss of consciousness.

A history of epilepsy may not be a bar to vehicle operation provided that the individual qualifies for an ordinary driving licence. Other conditions will probably require expert medical guidance from an Occupational Health Physician.

Diabetes

Diet and medication-controlled diabetes does not preclude driving duties, but unstable cases of insulin dependant diabetes may require additional guidance from an Occupational Health Physician. Where diabetes affects other areas, such as vision, then the individual will still need to meet those additional standards.

Medication

Where medication carries a warning about the safe operation of vehicles or machinery, a fitness decision may require additional guidance from an Occupational Health Physician.

Musculoskeletal Considerations

A prospective driver must be able to operate the controls of the vehicle in a safe fashion. They must be able to mount and dismount safely, be able to turn their head whilst reversing and react to emergencies (braking & steering) in a timely manner.

Mental Health considerations

Suspicion or knowledge of mental health disorders may lead to a temporary or permanent suspension from lift truck operation pending review by an Occupational Health Physician.

Fitness Decisions

Guidance is complex and extensive. It may be difficult to make a fitness decision at the time of the assessment, particularly if further information or input is required. In addition, it may sometimes be necessary to undertake some practical testing (**functional assessment**) of certain aspects of vehicle operation to ascertain if an individual's health deficits still enable them to safely operate fork trucks and other vehicles.

Scope of this document

This document has been provided to help you understand the complexity involved in making a fitness decision for the operation of company vehicles. It is not a complete specification and other factors, such as the practitioner's clinical judgement will come into play.

A fitness period of between one and three years is usually defined, dependant on findings, before a review is required.

It may apply equally to FLTs, cars & vans, tugs, sweepers, and other types of vehicles. In addition, it may be applied to lifting equipment, including pendant controlled overhead cranes, but not to heavy duty mobile cranes, heavy plant or equipment that involves working at height.

A fitness decision benchmarks the operator for that moment in time and does not necessarily predict future events. If an operator suffers a significant medical problem after their assessment, they should inform their employer or OH practitioner and ask for a medical review. An employer should make a similar request.

Further Information

The full test of DVLA medical guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessing-fitness-to-drive-a-guide-for-medical-professionals>

A copy of this information leaflet can be downloaded from:

<https://mohs.co.uk/>

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Medical Considerations for Workplace Vehicle Operations – An employee's Guide



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