

Introduction

At present HSE is not prescriptive on medicals for fitness to drive lift trucks, pendant cranes and other workplace vehicles and there is no legislation relating directly to this topic. Despite this, it remains good practice to ensure that employees are medically fit to operate this equipment and a similar standard should be applied to employees that drive cars and vans as part of their job.

HSE have adopted the standards published by the Drivers' Medical Unit at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and in most cases, a standard equivalent to that for the Group 1 entitlement (DVLA medical standards) should be applied.

More stringent activities, such as working in a particularly demanding environment, working at night, moving highly toxic or explosive materials etc, would probably be more appropriate to the Group 2 entitlement, equivalent to the standard required to drive buses, coaches, lorries and heavy plant.

Medical Considerations

The following are some of the criteria that prospective Group 1 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 18 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, and, 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 (for general health reasons, 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.

Hearing

The ability to hear instructions and warning signals is important, even when PPE is worn. The use of a hearing aid is acceptable. Assessment should be undertaken on an individual basis if a problem is identified and a functional assessment might help with the decision.

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 may 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 dependent diabetes may require additional guidance from an OH 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, guidance from an Occupational Health Physician may be required.

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 fashion.

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 is provided to help you understand the complexity involved in making a fitness decision. 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 be applied equally to FLTs, cars & vans, tugs, sweepers, and other types of vehicles. It can also 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. Significant changes in health status should trigger further review.

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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