

Code of Practice: Safe Use of Industrial Trucks

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the scope and purpose of the new Code of Practice?

The new Code of Practice **replaces** the existing *2001 Code of Practice Rider-operated lift trucks: operator training*. It has an increased scope which addresses many of the issues associated with the operation of industrial trucks in the modern workplace. It applies to the use of all types of rider-operated industrial trucks in all workplaces. Its aim is to provide practical guidelines, based on a risk management framework and a Safe System Approach, in order to help duty-holders identify, assess and control the risks specific to the operation of rider-operated industrial trucks.

The purpose of this code is to achieve several objectives, including:

- Raising awareness of the hazards associated with lift truck operation
- Promoting the consistent application of safe practices when using industrial trucks
- Highlighting employers' responsibilities to ensure their workplace is safe, their operators are competent, and they provide adequate supervision
- Helping employers to do effective risk assessments and implement safe management systems
- Providing a **framework for managing industrial truck operations** in a more holistic, safe, and sustainable way by introducing new requirements based on a Safe Systems Approach of:
 - safe drivers/operators,
 - safe vehicles,
 - safe workplace, and
 - safe operations.
- Raising the overall standard and consistency of lift truck training, by encouraging those trainers who currently deliver excellent training courses to continue to do so and to raise the quality of training courses to a minimum, common, standard by laying down **basic course syllabi** (Level 5 QQI) for **counterbalance and reach forklift trucks** and **minimum qualification requirements for trainers/instructors** (Level 6 QQI "Train the Trainer") while strengthening requirements on course duration and trainee:instructor ratio.

2. Who is the Code of Practice relevant to?

This Code of Practice is intended to be used by the following stakeholders:

- operators of industrial trucks;
- supervisors, managers and those in control of places of work where rider-operated industrial trucks are used;
- organisations providing training for operators of industrial trucks;
- businesses that hire or lease industrial trucks to others;
- safety representatives and trade union representatives; and
- employers assessing competency and training needs when employing industrial truck operators.

Persons who own, hire, lease, handle, operate, store, transport, maintain or manage the use of a rider-operated industrial lift truck in the workplace should familiarize themselves with the terms of this Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice provides a comprehensive resource for managing industrial truck risks in all workplaces.

3. Whose responsibility is it to provide training?

It is the duty of the employer, under occupational safety and health legislation, to provide training to operators of all types of industrial trucks including the attachments they need for the jobs they do. Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, employers are required to provide information, instruction and supervision to employees in a form and language that is likely to be understood by each employee.

Training organisations involved in industrial truck training, as well as the equipment manufacturer, should be able to advise on suitable training. However, employers have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that industrial truck operators are adequately trained. Employers should take account of the advice on instructor selection contained in the Code of Practice when choosing a training course and provider in order to ensure that the provider has the relevant competence and experience and that the course content and duration are sufficient to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

4. What industrial trucks fall within the scope of this Code of Practice?

The Code of Practice is aimed at providing practical guidelines to help duty-holders identify, assess and control the risks specific to the **operation of rider-operated industrial trucks**. The definition for industrial trucks used in the Code of Practice is taken from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard, *ISO 5053-1:2020, Industrial trucks — Vocabulary — Part 1: Types of industrial trucks*.

The definition is as follows:

Industrial trucks are wheeled vehicles having at least three wheels with a powered or nonpowered driving mechanism — except those running on rails — which are designed either to carry, tow, push, lift, stack or tier in racks any kind of load, and which are controlled either by an operator or by driverless automation.

Descriptions and diagrams of rider-operated industrial truck types within this definition, extracted from this ISO standard, are included in Annex I of the Code of Practice.

Examples of common rider-operated industrial trucks covered by this Code of Practice include counterbalance and reach forklifts, narrow aisle trucks, teleporters/telehandlers, side loaders, order pickers, lorry-mounted trucks, straddle carriers, container handlers, ride-on pallet trucks, etc.

5. What are the three stages of operator training?

The training of industrial truck operators can be broken down into three stages:

- basic training, which covers the basic skills and knowledge required for safe industrial truck operation;
- function-specific job training, which covers knowledge of workplace operations and any special requirements and handling attachments; and

- training on the job under supervision, which covers industrial truck operation on the job under close supervision.

It is essential that each stage be covered fully, with due consideration given to the experience, if any, of the trainee(s) and the type (or types) of industrial truck which they will be expected to operate. The first two stages can be combined or integrated but need to be carried out off the job (that is, sheltered from production and other pressures), and in advance of the third stage. The third stage needs to be carried out on the job, but under close supervision.

Training programmes should include training for all work activities that an operator will be required to perform in the course of their work and for reasonably foreseeable situations that may arise in the workplace. To achieve this, training programmes should consist of all three stages of training.

In order to be able to prove that all three stages of training have been completed, an employer should keep a detailed record of each stage of training for each operator.

6. How can an employer satisfy themselves that a training provider is competent to train their employees?

When choosing a training provider, careful consideration should be given to the qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience of the instructor/s, and their ability to demonstrate same. An employer should make enquiries with potential training providers in relation to the duration of the course, the learning outcomes covered, the time spent on practical activities, the coverage of the work activities that the operator will be required to perform in the workplace, etc. Potential training providers should be asked to supply evidence of their training and post-training experience on the type of industrial truck to be used, both as an instructor and operator, and their knowledge of and familiarity with conditions in the industry in which the trainees will work. Training providers can further demonstrate their competence, the quality of the courses they deliver and the maintenance of their training standards by being accredited by a relevant industry body.

7. How will I know a trainer is competent to deliver a training course?

The training of operators should be provided by suitably competent individuals or organisations. When choosing a training provider, careful consideration should be given to the qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience of the instructor(s), and their ability to demonstrate these. Instructors should be able to supply evidence of their training and post-training experience on the type of industrial truck to be used, both as an instructor and operator, and their knowledge of and familiarity with conditions in the industry in which the trainees will work. Operator training for counterbalance and reach trucks should only be carried out by instructors who have themselves undergone appropriate training in instructional techniques and skills assessment. Instructors should hold a QQI National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 6 Special Purpose Specification for Training and Development (QQI code 6S3372). This QQI-accredited 'train the trainer' award consists of two main modules: Training Needs Identification and Design, and Training Delivery and Evaluation. It aims to develop an understanding of the methodologies and processes available to approach training delivery and evaluation. An instructor who has earned this award is equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to design, develop and deliver effective training sessions and apply best practice in assessment.

Instructors should give instruction only on the types of industrial trucks and attachments for which they themselves have been trained and successfully assessed as operators.

Training providers can demonstrate their competence, the quality of the courses they deliver and the maintenance of their training standards by being accredited by a relevant industry body.

8. What is the duration on a novice training course?

The **normal duration of a course for novice operators of counterbalance and reach trucks is 32.5 hours over 5 days**. In certain circumstances, the length of a training course may be reduced to 3 or 4 days. In these circumstances, **the reduction must be justified in writing by the training provider, in consultation with the employer**, taking full account of each operator's previous experience, and their current level of skills,

- a) operating the type of industrial truck they will be operating, and
- b) performing the loading and lifting operations they will be performing

in the workplace. In all cases the time devoted to training needs to be sufficient to ensure that the basic training objectives and assessments of operator skills and learning outcomes can be achieved.

A trainer should not deliver a reduced course based on operator prior experience unless they are fully satisfied of the operator's experience and can justify same in writing. Where a course is adapted to meet company or operator requirements, the record of training and the **Employees Training Record should accurately reflect the actual content of the training delivered**, the learning outcomes achieved and any restrictions which apply because of modification of the course.

9. What is the desirable trainee:instructor:truck ratio for a typical training programme?

The **desirable trainee:instructor:truck ratio is 3:1:1**, but in any case, the ratio should not exceed 4:1:1 except for lecture or theory sessions.

The ratio of trainees to instructors and to trucks should enable the instructor to demonstrate each part of the practical training and allow each trainee to obtain adequate hands-on experience while also having an opportunity to learn from the performance of other trainees who may be in attendance. There should be adequate time for each trainee to practise operating the truck under close supervision and to prepare for the practical assessments of the learning outcomes.

10. Is there a specified operator training course for all types of industrial trucks?

No. The Code of Practice specifies the minimum requirements and learning outcomes for courses for counterbalance and reach trucks only, which are based on a national QQI standard. Trainers must be able to demonstrate that they can deliver a course which meets these requirements, *as a minimum*. This does not prevent trainers from using training frameworks and documentation developed under other accreditation schemes, provided they can show that they fulfil all the requirements and learning outcomes of the courses specified in Appendix 2 of the code.

For training programmes for other types of industrial trucks, the principles set out in the learning outcomes of the counterbalance and reach industrial truck operator training programmes in Appendix 2 of the Code of Practice should be adapted and applied.

11. What training is required for teleporters/telehandlers?

There are specific legislative requirements for the training of telescopic handler operators in the construction and quarrying sectors under the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and the Quarry Skills Certification Scheme (QSCS), respectively. In order to adhere to the terms of this code, the courses under the CSCS and QSCS can be adapted for the training of operators of telescopic handler industrial trucks in workplaces other than in the construction or quarrying sectors.

12. Should training be delivered at the employer's location or in a training centre?

Basic training may be given at a suitable training centre or venue, or on an employer's premises. Basic training needs to be carried out off the job. Even when conducted on an employer's premises, this means that the instructor and trainees, together with the industrial truck and loads they are training on, should be wholly concerned with training, kept away from normal commercial operations, and trainees should not be diverted to other activities while training is in progress. In order to maintain a safe environment, the training area must have its access restricted to the instructor and trainees. Warning signs should be prominently displayed at each access point. Where practicable, training areas should be sheltered from adverse weather conditions.

In a similar fashion, function-specific training, which covers knowledge of workplace operations and any special requirements and handling attachments, may be given at a suitable training centre or venue, or on an employer's premises.

The third stage needs to be carried out on the job, that is, at the employer's premises. It needs to be carried out on the job and under close supervision by someone with appropriate knowledge, possibly the trainee's usual supervisor. It should cover the application, under normal working conditions, of the skills already learned and include familiarisation with the assigned industrial truck and its controls, any accessories used, the loads to be lifted or moved, the site layout, local rules and emergency procedures, and any other feature of the work that is not practicable to teach off the job.

13. Is an employer's responsibility fulfilled by providing an operator with training to operate an industrial truck

No. The provision of training does not remove the employer's responsibility to ensure that operators are fully competent to operate industrial trucks within their specific workplace or the legal requirement to have adequate supervision in place to ensure that the operator is operating safely and in accordance with workplace protocols and systems of work.

Training alone will not ensure the competence of individuals; this will develop with experience and should be monitored.

The guiding principle is that the possession of a training certificate alone does not ensure the safe operation of industrial trucks, and employers need to maintain the competence of the operator through a documented, formal process of monitoring and assessment. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires employers to provide supervision necessary to ensure the safety, health, and welfare at work of their employees. Continued supervision is necessary to ensure that good standards of operation are maintained. It is essential that supervisors have enough training and knowledge to recognise safe and unsafe practices in the operation of industrial trucks. They need to understand the risks involved, and how to avoid or prevent them. Employers must be satisfied that

supervisors are competent to carry out effective observation and recognise unsafe practices and behaviour in both operators and other persons in the vicinity of industrial trucks. In order to facilitate this, it may be necessary to offer appropriate training to supervisors and managers of work activities involving industrial truck operations. This does not necessarily mean that supervisors must have received full operator training, although this would be beneficial.

14. Is there a requirement for refresher training?

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 training should be repeated periodically.

There is no specific requirement to provide refresher training after a set period of time, but even trained and experienced industrial truck operators need to be reassessed from time to time to ensure that they continue to operate industrial trucks safely. This assessment of the need for refresher training should form part of an employer's normal monitoring procedures and be formally scheduled in order to ensure that it is done at reasonable intervals.

In addition to routine safety monitoring and competency retention, refresher training might be appropriate where operators:

- have not used industrial trucks for some time,
- return to work after an extended absence,
- are occasional users of industrial trucks,
- appear to have developed unsafe working practices,
- have had an accident or near miss, or
- experience a change in their working practices or environment.

Employers may find it useful to record reassessment and refresher training in their safety monitoring records. Employers can decide that automatic refresher training after a set time period is the best way of making sure that employees are operating safely, but, where this approach is adopted, it will still be necessary to monitor performance in case retraining is required before the set period ends. The guiding principle is that the possession of a training certificate alone does not ensure the safe operation of industrial trucks, and employers need to maintain the competence of the operator through a documented, formal process of monitoring and assessment.

Training alone will not ensure the competence of individuals; this will develop with experience and should be monitored. Continued supervision will be necessary to ensure that good standards of operation are maintained.

15. What is conversion training and when is it required?

An operator who has been trained for one type of industrial truck or handling attachment cannot safely operate others for which they have not been trained without additional conversion training.

Conversion training to allow operators to extend the range of industrial trucks they are qualified to operate should be provided when an operator is required to operate a different type of industrial truck than what they have previously been trained on. For example:

- There may be significant variations in the configuration or application of controls, even in the same truck types.
- There may be an introduction or change of a handling attachment.

- An operator may be required to operate a significantly larger or more powerful industrial truck.
- An operator may be required to operate a completely different type of truck, such as a narrow aisle man-up stacking truck or a side-loading truck.
- An operator may be required to operate on a different site or in a different environment.

16. What should happen if a jobseeker presents seeking employment with a certificate of training?

Where a potential employee presents themselves as having training and sufficient operating experience already, employers must satisfy themselves that this is the case. They should look for documentary evidence of the training award, and ensure the documentation is sufficient to satisfy themselves that the training, experience, and ability is in fact sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code of Practice and to allow safe operation of the industrial trucks and handling attachments in the specific working environment concerned.

Where evidence of prior training is not available, sufficiently detailed or reliable, employers will need to provide training before allowing the employee to operate an industrial truck. In the case where evidence of prior training (basic and function-specific) is available and reliable, an employer should apply the third stage of training, i.e., training on-the-job under supervision.

New employees or employees operating at a new site who are already the holders of a certificate of training should always satisfactorily complete the third stage of training, training on the site under close supervision, before being allowed to operate an industrial truck unsupervised at a site new to them. This training needs to be carried out on the job and under close supervision by someone with appropriate knowledge and experience. It should cover the application, under normal working conditions, of the skills already learned and include familiarisation with the assigned industrial truck and its controls, any accessories used, the loads to be lifted or moved, the site layout, local rules and emergency procedures, and any other feature of the work that is not practicable to teach off the job. The employer should record the satisfactory completion of this element of training in the employee's training record before providing the employee with written authorisation to operate the type(s) of industrial truck(s) for which all three elements of training have been successfully completed.

17. What is the transition period?

Where an operator has been trained and can demonstrate evidence of that training under the 2001 Code of Practice, *Code of Practice: Rider-operated lift trucks: operator training*, such training will continue to be recognised when this new Code of Practice comes into operation.

Training providers operating under the terms of the 2001 Code of Practice can, if required, continue to operate under the requirements of that Code for a period of 18 months from the date this Code of Practice comes into operation (12 September 2025), after which time all operator training should be in accordance with the requirements of this Code of Practice. This means that training providers of counterbalance and reach truck operator training who do not possess Level 6 "train the trainer" qualifications have an 18-month period to acquire these qualifications if they want to continue delivering such training programmes.

All existing training providers will need to ensure that their courses are fully in compliance with this Code of Practice, in terms of content and duration, within a period of 18 months from the date this Code of Practice comes into operation. (12 September 2025)

18. Where are Level 6 “Train the Trainer” courses available?

Further Education and Training (FET) offers a wide variety of life-long education options. FET courses and programmes are provided through the Education and Training Board (ETB) network throughout the country as well as through other local providers including online through SOLAS’ eCollege. FET courses are provided at levels one to six on the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#).

Courses and course locations can be searched for on the Further Education and Training Course Hub (FETCH) available at <https://www.fetchcourses.ie/>

There may be certain eligibility criteria for a course, but the course provider or ETB can be contacted for more information.

19. Who will decide on matters regarding the competence of a training provider or the appropriateness of a training course provided?

Ultimately this will be a decision for a Court to make in the event of a dispute, and in particular, should there be need for an investigation into the circumstances of an adverse industrial truck incident where training of the operator may be a factor. This Code of Practice provides the Court with practical guidance on demonstrating compliance with legal requirements in relation to the use of industrial trucks and will be used to inform decisions.

20. Is wearing a seatbelt necessary when operating an industrial truck?

Seatbelts and other restraint systems should be used when they are provided, unless a risk assessment indicates it is not safe to do so and other risk controls, which provide the same level of protection or higher, are implemented. This means that there can be some reliance on risk assessment to determine other adequate mitigation measures to justify situations where the use of seat belts may not be needed.

21. Can a person under the age of 18 years operate an industrial truck?

Under Regulation 51 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 229 of 2007), as amended, **persons under the age of 18 are not permitted to operate lifting equipment.**