

Notice to Owners and Users of Materials Handling and Plant Equipment

In consultation with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) the following notice has been prepared as a joint industry-wide statement from:

- The British Industrial Truck Association (BITA), and
- The Fork Lift Truck Association (FLTA)

As the world responds to the global pandemic of COVID-19, we recognise and commend your commitment to doing all you can to help protect your employees, their families and those in your communities. Materials Handling and Plant Equipment is everywhere, and for many companies they are the cornerstone of keeping their business operational.

As an industry who work predominantly on customer's sites, the health, safety and wellbeing of your staff, your customers and anyone associated with your business is of the utmost importance to us at this challenging time. It is our industry wide objective during this time, as I'm sure it is for you, that we take all appropriate steps we can to ensure:

1. We do all we can to protect staff and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus;
2. We keep our customer's businesses operational and in particular those playing vital roles in supply chains that support our communities and our health services.

We fully recognise that in these unprecedented times many of you are taking robust and dynamic action to help protect your staff and as an industry we fully support this. As part of these measures, it has come to our attention that some of you have taken the step to reduce or entirely ban any external parties from attending your sites.

It is our industry wide concern that in the commendable urgency of taking action, some customers may have overlooked the due consideration of what is **essential** ongoing activity that must remain in place and what is **non-essential** activity that can be re-planned, deferred or stopped during the crisis.

Control measures around the use of Materials Handling and Plant Equipment should not be taken lightly. It is an unfortunate truth that it is not an uncommon occurrence for these types of equipment to be involved in serious or even fatal accidents when they are not managed correctly as we're sure you are all too aware as a responsible user.

The ongoing scheduled maintenance, repair and statutory inspection of Materials Handling and Plant Equipment is fundamental to their safe use. By stopping these activities, users are at a very serious risk of jeopardising the safety of their staff and any person the equipment interacts with. Failure to maintain, repair and inspect equipment within agreed guidelines leads to component failures, damage and ultimately accidents.

As an industry, we work closely with the Health and Safety Executive and we recognise it as our joint responsibility to help advise equipment users on fundamental best practice and indeed legal requirements to help keep their staff safe and their businesses compliant.

- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) make clear that scheduled maintenance and inspections must be undertaken by a suitably competent person in line with recommended intervals.
- The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) make clear that any lifting equipment must be subject to a Thorough Examination at intervals advised by a Competent Person, not exceeding 12 months (6 months for equipment that lifts people).

While we appreciate we are in unprecedented times, these fundamental requirements remain in place as a strict expectation for any business operating Materials Handling and Plant Equipment. It is our cross-party view between BITA and the FLTA that scheduled maintenance, repairs and statutory inspections should be considered **essential ongoing activities** for any users of such equipment.

While equipment remains operational, it is imperative for the safety of your staff and the overall legal compliance of your business that you allow your service and maintenance provider and where applicable your Thorough Examination provider, ready access to the equipment to keep it safe.

This is an anxious time for all of us and whilst we appreciate you are doing all you can in good faith and with the best of intentions, we cannot lose sight of the fundamental legal and best practice requirements to maintain a safe workplace.



James Clark
Secretary General
British Industrial Truck Association



Tim Waples
Chief Executive
The Fork Lift Truck Association