

Daily Forklift Inspection Guide

What should be checked before a truck is used, what to look for and how to record the inspection

A forklift can appear operational while still having defects that make it unsafe to use. A damaged tyre, hydraulic leak, defective brake, cracked fork or failed warning device may only become obvious when someone deliberately checks for it.

A pre-use inspection gives the operator an opportunity to identify those problems **before the truck enters service**.

HSE guidance states that employers should have a documented pre-shift check, a system for reporting defects and ensuring remedial work is completed, planned routine maintenance, and periodic Thorough Examination and safety inspection. At the beginning of each shift, the operator should check the truck in accordance with the manufacturer's handbook and document the results.

This guide provides a practical starting point. The manufacturer's instructions for the specific truck and attachments, together with your own risk assessment and safe system of work, should always take precedence.

When should the inspection be completed?

The important distinction is that this is not simply a **once-a-day** exercise.

Where a truck operates across several shifts, the check should normally be completed **at the beginning of each shift before the truck is put into normal use**. UKMHA also recommends that the operator taking control of the truck completes and documents the check.

The check should be carried out by an operator who has been given appropriate instruction on:

- what needs checking;
- what acceptable condition looks like;
- how defects should be reported;
- which defects mean the truck must not be used.

The inspection itself does not make an unsafe truck safe. Its value comes from identifying defects and making sure the correct action follows.

What should be checked?

The following items reflect the typical pre-shift checks identified by HSE in L117. The exact checklist should be adapted to the truck type, attachments, power source, manufacturer's handbook and operating environment.

Area	What to check	What to look for
Tyres	Inspect every tyre	Cuts, chunks missing, embedded objects, bubbles, excessive wear or sidewall damage
Tyre pressure	Pneumatic tyres only	Pressure outside the manufacturer's specification or signs of deflation
Wheels and rims	Inspect condition and security	Damage, distorted rims, loose or missing wheel nuts
Forks	Inspect both forks carefully	Cracks, particularly around the heels and mounting hooks, bent forks, damaged tips or missing/damaged locking devices
Mast and chains	Inspect visible components	Damaged or elongated chain links, insecure anchor pins or bolts, poor lubrication or obvious damage
Hydraulic system	Look around mast, cylinders, hoses and connections	Oil leaks, damaged hoses, loose fittings or an unexpectedly low hydraulic-fluid level
Lifting and tilt functions	Operate through a safe functional test	Jerky movement, unusual noise, failure to lift/lower/tilt correctly or problems with attachments
Attachments	Check fitted attachments and securing devices	Damage, looseness, incorrect mounting or ineffective operation
Overhead guard	Inspect condition and security	Damage, distortion, loose fixings or unauthorised modification
Load back-rest	Inspect where fitted	Damage, missing components or insecure mounting

Knowledge Centre

Area	What to check	What to look for
Service brake	Test in a safe area	Poor response, excessive travel, pulling or inability to stop effectively
Parking brake	Test operation	Failure to hold the truck securely
Steering	Functional test	Excessive play, abnormal resistance, unusual noise or poor response
Horn / audible warnings	Test each fitted warning device	No sound, weak operation or intermittent failure
Lights and beacons	Check where fitted	Failed lamps, damaged lenses or warning beacons not operating
Mirrors / cameras / visibility aids	Check condition and correct position	Damage, dirt, poor adjustment or unavailable camera/monitor images
Battery - electric trucks	Check condition and security	Insufficient charge for the intended period of operation, leaks, damaged connectors/cables, insecure battery or charging lead still connected
Fluids - combustion trucks	Check relevant levels	Fuel, coolant, engine oil and transmission fluids outside manufacturer limits
Operator restraint	Check seat belt or other restraint where fitted	Damage, failure to latch, damaged anchorage or ineffective operation
General condition	Walk around the truck	New impact damage, loose panels, fluid underneath the truck, unusual damage or anything visibly different from normal

HSE specifically identifies tyres, wheels, brakes, steering, fluids, batteries, lifting/tilting systems, hydraulics, overhead guard, load back-rest, forks, chains, horn, lights and visibility aids among the items normally included in a pre-shift inspection.

Where an operator restraint such as a seat belt is fitted, it should be used; checking that it is serviceable before operation is therefore sensible good practice.

A practical inspection sequence

1. Start with a walk-around

Before operating the truck, walk around it and look for anything obviously wrong.

Look underneath for leaks. Check for impact damage. Look at the tyres and wheels. Inspect the forks, carriage, mast, chains, guard and any attachment.

Do not treat familiarity with the truck as evidence that it is safe. The objective is to deliberately look for changes in condition.

2. Check the power source

For an electric truck, confirm the battery is adequately charged, secure and free from visible leaks or damage. The charging lead should be disconnected and correctly stored before the truck is used.

For an internal-combustion truck, check the fluid and fuel-system items required by the manufacturer.

3. Enter the operating position

Check the seat, restraint system, mirrors and other visibility aids.

Make sure nothing interferes with the controls or the operator's ability to see the operating area.

4. Carry out controlled functional checks

Once it is safe to start the truck, test the systems required by the manufacturer and site procedure.

This normally includes steering, service brake, parking brake, horn, lights and the lifting, lowering and tilt functions.

Attachments should also be tested where fitted.

Functional tests should be completed in a suitable area without exposing pedestrians or other workers to unnecessary risk.

5. Record the result before normal use

The inspection is not complete simply because the operator has looked at the truck.

The result should be recorded, including any defect found and whether the truck is safe to use.

What happens if a defect is found?

The response should depend on the nature and severity of the defect.

Any defect that could affect safe operation should be reported through the organisation's defect-management process. HSE guidance states that safety-critical defects mean the lift truck should not be used until the fault has been rectified.

Operators should not attempt repairs or adjustments unless they are appropriately qualified and authorised to do so.

A robust process should therefore make the status of the truck clear:

Safe to use - the required checks have been completed and no defect prevents operation.

Defect reported - use subject to authorised assessment - only where your documented procedure permits this and the defect has been assessed appropriately.

Do not use - a safety-critical defect has been identified or the condition of the truck is uncertain.

Never rely on verbal messages alone for significant defects. The defect should be traceable to the truck and the inspection in which it was identified.

How to record a forklift inspection manually

A paper system can work effectively if it is properly designed and consistently followed.

A manual inspection record should normally identify:

Information	Why it matters
Truck / asset identification	Shows exactly which truck was inspected
Date	Establishes when the check took place

Knowledge Centre

Information	Why it matters
Time / shift	Demonstrates that the relevant pre-shift check was completed
Operator	Identifies who performed the inspection
Individual checklist items	Demonstrates what was actually checked
Pass / fail / N/A	Records the condition found
Defect description	Provides enough information for the issue to be understood
Truck status	Makes clear whether the truck can be used
Action taken	Records who was notified or what happened next
Sign-off	Provides accountability for the inspection

UKMHA recommends that pre-use checks are documented and that the system allows operators to record their findings and makes clear to others whether the truck was considered safe or unsafe at the last inspection.

Making a paper system work

The biggest weakness of paper is usually not the checklist itself. It is **control of the information afterwards**.

A workable manual process needs a defined location for blank check sheets, a process for completed sheets, a clear defect-reporting route, a method of stopping an unsafe truck being used and a way of retrieving historic records when required.

Someone should also review the records rather than simply filing them.

Otherwise a business can have hundreds of completed check sheets while still having poor visibility of missed inspections and unresolved defects.

Recording forklift inspections with MHE Checker

MHE Checker digitises the same inspection process.

The operator still carries out the physical inspection of the truck. **The platform does not replace the operator's judgement or the inspection itself.**

What changes is the way the inspection is controlled and recorded.

The operator identifies the asset, completes the required digital checklist and records the condition of each inspection point.

From there, the administrative evidence is captured automatically by the platform.

MHE Checker can associate the inspection with the:

- individual operator;
- specific asset;
- date and time;
- completed checklist;
- inspection result;
- defects identified;
- photographs or supporting evidence where used;
- inspection history for that asset.

If a defect is identified, it can be raised directly against the truck rather than being transferred from a paper form into a separate defect log.

Managers can then see which assets have been checked, which have not, which have defects and which are unavailable from the same platform.

This removes one of the fundamental limitations of paper: **the difference between a check being completed and management knowing that it has been completed.**

What becomes automatic?

With MHE Checker, the operator still performs the inspection, but the system automatically creates much of the evidence around it.

Instead of manually recording:

Operator + truck + time + checklist + result + defect + history

across several pieces of paper or spreadsheets, those records remain connected to the asset.

That makes it considerably easier to answer practical questions such as:

Has this truck been checked this shift?

Who completed the inspection?

What failed?

Was a defect raised?

Is the truck currently available?

What did the previous inspections show?

Paper checks vs digital checks

Manual paper process	MHE Checker
Operator completes paper checklist	Operator completes digital checklist
Asset number written manually	Inspection linked directly to the asset
Date/time written manually	Date and time recorded automatically
Operator signs form	Inspection linked to the logged-in operator
Defect may require separate form/email/call	Defect recorded directly against the asset
Manager must collect forms	Status available centrally
Missed checks may not be noticed immediately	Missing inspection status is visible
Historic records stored in folders	Inspection history retained against the asset
Reporting often requires manual collation	Fleet status can be viewed directly from the platform

The objective is not digitisation for its own sake. The objective is **better control of the inspection process and better evidence that the control is working.**

Pre-shift inspection is only one layer of forklift safety

A daily or pre-shift check does **not** replace:

- planned preventive maintenance;
- servicing in accordance with manufacturer recommendations;
- formal inspection where required under PUWER;
- statutory Thorough Examination under LOLER and PUWER.

HSE explicitly distinguishes routine checks and maintenance from Thorough Examination. For most lift trucks, lifting components are normally thoroughly examined at least every 12 months unless an examination scheme specifies otherwise; trucks or accessories used to lift people normally require more frequent examination.

A good MHE control system therefore combines:

pre-shift checks + defect management + maintenance + formal inspection + Thorough Examination + evidence

rather than treating any one of these as sufficient on its own.

The key principle

A forklift inspection should achieve more than a completed checklist.

It should establish:

Is this truck safe to use now?

And the system around the check should allow the organisation to demonstrate:

who checked it, when they checked it, what they found and what happened next.

Whether that record is maintained on paper or digitally, those are the controls that turn a routine inspection into useful safety evidence.

Sources and further guidance

This guide has been prepared with reference to:

[Health and Safety Executive — L117: Rider-operated lift trucks: Operator training and safe use](#)

The principal HSE Approved Code of Practice and guidance covering rider-operated lift trucks, including pre-shift checks, maintenance and Thorough Examination.

[Health and Safety Executive — Inspection, maintenance and repair](#)

HSE guidance on daily vehicle checks, planned maintenance and employer responsibilities.

[Health and Safety Executive — Thorough examinations and inspections of lifting equipment](#)

Guidance explaining the distinction between routine checks, inspections and statutory Thorough Examination.

[UK Material Handling Association — FS28 Forklift Truck Operator Daily Checks](#)

Industry guidance covering why daily checks matter, typical inspection points and effective recording systems.

External links are provided for information and further reading only. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement, approval or affiliation with MHE Checker by HSE, UKMHA or any other organisation referenced in this guide.

This guide provides general practical guidance for UK workplaces. It is not a substitute for the manufacturer's instructions, a site-specific risk assessment, competent safety advice or the requirements applying to a particular truck, attachment or operation.