Lift truck operator frequently asked questions

Based on CSA B335:25, *Safety standard for lift trucks*

These FAQs provide general guidance based on CSA B335:25, *Safety standard for lift trucks* and are intended to support learning for lift truck operators and employers. Where responsibilities differ, the answer identifies the employer or the operator and references trainer responsibilities where applicable. Employers remain responsible for complying with applicable legislative requirements and must consult their authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) where clarification is required.

Certification requirements and training process

What do I need to do to become a certified lift truck (forklift) operator?

A: Under CSA B335:25, you must complete three parts to be deemed a competent lift truck operator:

Part 1—Theory training and knowledge verification

Successfully complete the lift-truck theory training and a theory test. This may be delivered by

- a qualified third-party service provider; or
- an in-house trainer who meets the trainer requirements in Clause 7 of CSA B335:25.

Part 2—Practical training

Complete the hands-on practical training under the supervision of a competent trainer. This training covers the knowledge and skills required to operate a lift truck in your workplace.

Experienced operators may proceed directly to Part 3, depending on workplace policy.

Part 3—Practical evaluation

A qualified trainer evaluates your practical skills and confirms competence, as outlined in CSA B335:25.

Is an online lift truck course equivalent to an in-person certification?

A: Only in part. Some online theory programs offered by qualified providers meet the theory requirements of CSA B335:25. However:

- Many online programs do not meet the standard—due diligence is required.
- When selecting a program, the employer is expected to confirm that it meets the training requirements of CSA B335:25, not merely that it is “based on” the standard.
- Theory training alone does not meet the full certification requirements.

To be fully certified, you must also complete

- practical training (Part 2) if required; and
- a hands-on practical evaluation (Part 3) on the equipment you will be using.

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How long does lift truck operator training typically take?

A: Training duration varies based on the operator's experience, type of lift truck, and training method used.

Theory training: This usually lasts between four and eight hours, according to Annex E of CSA B335:25.

Practical training and evaluation: The duration varies based on

- the operator's experience;
- the number and type of lift trucks involved; and
- workplace conditions and hazards.

Refresher training for experienced operators usually requires less practical time.

Can lift truck operator certification training be done entirely online?

A: No. While theory training (Part 1) may be delivered online by qualified providers, full certification under CSA B335:25 requires

- practical training (Part 2) if required; and
- hands-on practical evaluation (Part 3).

Both must be completed on the equipment the operator will use.

Renewal, validity, and transferability

Can we provide refresher (renewal) training internally for our employees?

A: Yes. CSA B335:25 does not require employers to use an external training provider. The employer is responsible for determining

- operator training needs;
- trainer competency;
- theory and practical training content (meets or exceeds CSA B335:25); and
- methods for evaluating knowledge and skills.

If these requirements are met, refresher training may be conducted in-house.

How long is lift truck certification valid?

A: Certification validity depends on the applicable provincial or federal authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

As a baseline, Clause 7.2 of CSA B335:25 recommends that employers retrain operators at intervals not exceeding three years, unless the AHJ specifies a shorter time frame.

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Employers may also require retraining when triggered by

- an incident or near miss;
- the introduction of new equipment;
- long periods without operating; and
- observed unsafe operation.

If I have a current lift truck certification from a previous employer, do I need to redo the course?

A: Typically, yes. Lift truck certifications are generally not transferable between employers.

Review

- Clause 6.17 of CSA B335:25 on retraining and upgrade training; and
- applicable provincial or territorial occupational health and safety (OHS) regulations.

Some employers may choose to permit a workplace-specific competency assessment instead, depending on policy and regulatory requirements.

If I was trained as a lift truck trainer, am I certified for life?

A: No. Trainer qualifications are not lifelong. CSA B335:25 recommends retraining at intervals not exceeding three years, unless the AHJ specifies a shorter time frame.

An employee has a valid lift truck certification from the United States. Is it recognized in Canada?

A: Generally, no. Lift truck certifications are typically not transferable between organizations, including those outside Canada.

Confirm the requirements with your provincial or territorial OHS authority. If there is any uncertainty, retraining the employee to CSA B335:25 is the safest approach.

Does occupational health and safety legislation require lift truck refresher training every 36 months?

A: Most OHS legislation does not specifically mandate CSA B335:25. However, the standard is widely recognized as best practice.

Inspectors may issue orders under a general duty clause when an employer cannot demonstrate that reasonable precautions have been taken. Following CSA B335:25 supports due diligence.

For clarification, you may contact your AHJ (e.g., Ministry of Labour, WorkSafe, CNESST).

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Operator qualifications and eligibility

Are there medical or physical requirements for lift truck operators?

A: CSA B335:25 does not specify detailed medical or physical requirements. The standard required that the operator be capable of operating the lift truck safely for the specific application.

Any additional requirements, including accommodation for hearing-impaired operators, must be identified and managed by the employer.

Is there a minimum age requirement to operate a lift truck?

A: Minimum age requirements are set by provincial or industry-specific regulations. However, industry practice generally sets the minimum age at 18 years.

Is a provincial automobile driver's licence required to operate a lift truck?

A: No. A provincial automobile driver's licence is not legally required to operate a lift truck inside a private facility or warehouse, unless the employer's internal policy requires it.

Operators must be trained, evaluated, and deemed competent.

Scope and documentation of certification

What documentation is required for in-house lift truck training?

A: Employers may provide in-house lift truck training by designating a competent internal trainer.

A common approach is for the trainer to complete a train-the-trainer course delivered by a qualified third-party provider. These programs typically include

- training materials aligned with CSA B335:25;
- evaluation tools; and
- guidance on issuing certificates or wallet cards.

The employer remains responsible for verifying that all CSA B335:25 requirements are met.

What is the difference between a "licence" and a "certificate"?

A: In Canada, there is no government-issued lift truck licence. Instead, operators receive

- a certificate of training, and/or
- a wallet card.

These documents confirm that the operator has been evaluated and deemed competent by a qualified trainer.

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Does lift truck certification cover all types of lift trucks?

A: No. Certification is specific to the type of lift truck (e.g., sit-down counterbalance, stand-up reach truck, walkie pallet truck).

Additional training is required if an operator

- moves to a different type of lift truck; or
- switches to a significantly different model or configuration.

This aligns with CSA B335:25.

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