

Medical fitness for operators - a guide

The CPA has published new guidance on medical fitness requirements for operating construction equipment. The guidance 'Medical Fitness to Operate Construction Plant' has been prepared on behalf of the UK's Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group in conjunction with the Health & Safety Executive, the UK Contractors Group, Constructing Better Health and others.



The guidance is intended to provide clarity on the medical fitness assessment process, and outlines the steps that should be taken by employers to ensure that crane and equipment operators have an appropriate level of fitness for the job. It comprises 13 sections with 11 Annex documents.

Medical fitness and recruitment.

The difficulties surrounding medical fitness and recruitment are covered at length and there is a guide on what is deemed appropriate content for job advertisements - for instance the job specification must accurately reflect the requirements of the job. If a skill test is required as part of the interview, this must be clearly stated. It advises that application forms cannot ask questions about health and fitness unless they relate to a characteristic that is essential to the job and talks about selection for interview, the interview itself and evaluation of candidates.

A crane operator's medical fitness and the specific requirements of the machine are critical and a holistic approach to the individual operator is essential. For example different levels of fitness and ability are required for mobile, crawler and tower cranes.

CPA senior manager Kevin Minton said: "A good example of this is where a plant company is recruiting tower crane drivers - it would be lawful under the equality act to ask about disability or health on the application form if the questions related directly to climbing ladders to a significant height, as this is intrinsic to the job. However, asking general questions about a candidate's health history would not be lawful."

"Another consideration when working with tower cranes would be - is the operator comfortable with long periods of isolation working in his cab. Concentration and the ability to stay aware are also of extreme importance. Good hearing and vision are also essential for all crane operators. A crawler or mobile crane operator would need the ability to climb just a short distance, but would need the ability to exit a restricted worksite in an emergency."

Planning routine health assessments

The guidance also deals with planning, setting up and implementation of medical fitness assessment arrangements and managing those employees who develop health problems whilst at work. Contents include advice on



medical standards, and choosing an Occupational Health Service Provider (OHSP), which is an essential part of the medical assessment process. The guidance recommends that medical fitness assessments are normally carried out at three year intervals, regardless of age. Striking a balance between ensuring that medical assessments are frequent enough to identify changes but not so frequent that they discourage employees or become an unnecessary expense.

Evidence of medical fitness for customers

One of the purposes of medical assessments for equipment operators is to be able to demonstrate to customers renting operated plant, that the operators they are effectively hiring, are medically fit to undertake the tasks that they are asked to do. All of the guidance in the document is aimed at managers of both large and small organisations, particularly those who might not have access to an HR (Human Resources) department.



The document is available to download free of charge on the CPA website: www.cpa.uk.net

Next month this page will come back to the revised CPA guidance 'Rescue of Personnel from Height on Tower Cranes'. In last month's issue an error occurred with a PDF transfer which corrupted the article covering this subject. It will also report on the tower crane interest group meeting scheduled for March 21st.



The Construction Plant-Hire Association - the CPA - is among other things, the UK's crane association and one of the more active members of ESTA, the European crane and heavy transport association.