

From the Chief Executive

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Sent via email

10 August 2023

Rt. Hon. Stephen Timms MP
Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Timms

Thank you for your letter of 21 July 2023 seeking further information on the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) investigation into fires on liquid petroleum gas (LPG) fuelled forklift truck (FLT). I have responded to your specific questions below:

Question 1 - the number of LPG fuelled FLT explosions reported to HSE in the last 12 months

Incidents involving fire and explosion, associated with FLTs are reportable under [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations \(RIDDOR\) 2013](#) in specific circumstances either following certain injuries, as a dangerous occurrence when normal operations are stopped for more than 24 hours or as a dangerous occurrence related to the quantity of flammable substance released. Therefore, not all incidents are reportable. We have received four reports of fires on LPG FLTs in the last 12 months.

Question 2 - the number of those under investigation by the HSE in the last 12 months, broken down by whether they are current or completed investigations

Currently there are three investigations ongoing of LPG fuelled FLT fires. The fourth incident was not selected for investigation.

Question 3 - an update on the status of HSE's investigation to determine the causal factors

The incidents reported are characterised as a short-lived fire which quickly subsides allowing access to turn off the fuel supply to the FLT.

We have established the cause of the fire on each occasion was a sticking component in one make and model of vaporiser leading to leakage of unignited gas. Vaporisers from one of the affected FLTs and a range of other models were tested by our Science Division (SD)

revealing the presence of sticky contamination from LPG. Work is ongoing to characterise this substance and find its source. We have identified the particular make and model of vaporiser which fails open if contaminated. The manufacturer of this vaporiser is supplying for retrofit a modified unit that will not fail open.

On 25 May 2023 we issued a Safety Notice [LPG forklift truck fire risk - Safety bulletin - HSE](#) to warn users of the risk of fire and how to manage it safely. We are also working with the FLT manufacturers to ensure that users are informed of actions to take.

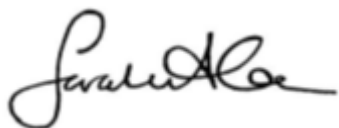
Testing of LPG and contaminated bulk tank samples is underway but currently we believe the LPG complies with the relevant standard BS 4250. We are engaging with the LPG supply chain to better understand the quality of product being supplied.

Question 4 - an indication of when a decision would be taken on additional safeguards or guidance that needs to be followed when operating such trucks.

If FLT users follow the precautions in the safety notice the risk of fire during start-up is minimised. Therefore, no additional safeguards or guidance are needed.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me and I hope this letter gives the Committee confidence into HSE's investigation in the matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Albon', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Albon
Chief Executive, Health and Safety Executive



Work and Pensions Committee

21 July 2023

Sarah Albon

Chief Executive
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
(By e-mail only)

Dear Sarah,

LPG fuelled forklift trucks

It has been brought to my attention that there have been at least two LPG fuelled forklift truck explosions since October 2022. I understand that at the beginning of this year, HSE categorised this as a level one priority and undertook to initiate an investigation to determine the causal factors of the explosions.

I would therefore be grateful if you could provide the Committee with:

- the number of LPG fuelled forklift truck explosions which have been reported to HSE in the last 12 months;
- the number of LPG fuelled forklift truck explosions under investigation by the HSE in the last 12 months, broken down by whether they are current or completed investigations;
- an update on the status of HSE's investigation to determine the causal factors of the explosions; and
- an indication of when a decision would be taken on additional safeguards or guidance that needs to be followed when operating such trucks.

I would be grateful for your response to these questions by Wednesday 6 September. As is usual practice with the Committee's correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee's website.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee