

# CPCS renewal test factsheet



## Introduction to the CPCS renewal test

The industry-led CPCS Management Committee has determined that key safety-related knowledge must be checked on each category prior to the renewal of a CPCS Competent Operator (blue) card. The CPCS renewal test is the means by which blue cardholders will be tested on topics that reflect safety issues identified through consultation, that occur regularly on site.

For each topic identified there is a set of questions, from which a number will be included in the test and for which supporting information is provided in this factsheet. Each test will ask a total of 15 questions selected randomly to ensure all topics are covered.

The test will cover all categories within the scheme through modules. Some modules have been devised to cover a range of similar CPCS categories.

The CPCS renewal test is available on the CITB Testing Services platform alongside the Health, safety and environment test.

The questions and answers will not be published but factsheets are available for each module to cover the topics.

## How to use this factsheet

Prior to taking the test, cardholders are advised to carefully study the factsheet, which will prepare them in deciding the correct answer or answers to each given question. Correct answers are based on legislation or good practice adopted, in the majority of cases, by the construction and allied sectors.

It is acknowledged that variations may occur depending on the nature of the operation or on how the machine is used. However the correct answer to each question is based on common practices or manufacturers' requirements for the majority of machine types within each module, and applies to this test irrespective of how a machine may be used within a particular activity or sector. It is important, therefore, that this factsheet is studied carefully.

The questions are selected randomly and will not appear in the order that topics appear in this factsheet.

If the card holder does not answer all the questions correctly, the score report issued after completing the test will indicate the topic areas in which the questions were answered incorrectly. The cardholder should, prior to retaking the test, re-study all topic areas.

## Scoring the test

To be successful in this module, cardholders need to correctly answer a minimum of 12 out of the 15 questions presented. However, because many of the questions are safety-related, in the majority of cases, a minimum number of questions per topic need to be answered correctly. Failure to do so, even if the overall minimum number of correct answers has been reached, may mean that the cardholder is unsuccessful on the test.

The top of each topic states the number of questions that will be presented for each topic and the minimum number of questions that must be answered correctly in order to pass the test.

## Concessions

To avoid duplication of questions where similar categories are held, booking concessions are provided. This means that, if several similar categories are held, only one module needs to be booked. The following chart indicates if there is a booking concession for this category.

Concessions are provided to holders of the category of Skip handler.

### Other categories held:

No concessions available

### Needs only to book:

No concessions available

**Note:** *The above concessions are an outline of what tests you may have to book; please refer to Module matcher for details of full concessions where more than one category is held.*

This factsheet has been designed to highlight only topics that have been identified through industry consultation area with safety issues or where good practice is often not complied with. The questions within the CPCS renewal test for this category also reflect this.

It is not intended as a training tool and cannot list all essential knowledge and understanding for this category. Operators must always follow manufacturers' requirements, industry good practice and be aware of their own limitations with the machine, and seek further guidance and help where needed.

**Further information about the CPCS renewal test can be found at [www.citb.co.uk/cpcs](http://www.citb.co.uk/cpcs)**

## Preparation and completing work *(Preparation)*

Topic scoring information: 1 correct answer required out of 3 questions presented to pass

- Skip handlers are by definition road-going commercial –type vehicles, the majority of which transport industrial waste-type materials to a transfer station for segregation and/or re-use, or for depositing at landfill sites. They drop off empty skips or containers and collect loaded skips or containers for transport. Two methods of skip handlers are incorporated within CPCS – units that attach to a skip using lifting chains which are connected to a pair of lifting arms and place it on the vehicle bed, or an extended single arm that hooks onto a container which is drawn on rollers onto the vehicle bed. Each method has correct lifting and loading procedures that need to be followed by the operator/driver along with requirements for transporting loads on the public highway. This factsheet aims to make operators aware of their responsibilities and good practice that needs to be followed, with many of the highlighted issues being a result of past incidents and accidents.
- Proper pre-use checks are a requirement for the safe operation of any type of plant or vehicle. The checks and inspections that need to be made and their frequency are indicated in the operator’s or user’s manual for both the vehicle and skip/container handling components. The operator needs to follow the relevant manufacturer’s instructions and if the operator notices any defect, for example if a lift ram is creeping or moving when the hydraulic controls are in the neutral position, they must report it immediately and take the vehicle out of service until the appropriate expertise decides what action needs to be taken. Failure to properly check all relevant components before work could cause incidents or injuries because faults can affect both performance and safety.
- Daily checks should be made to the vehicle’s lifting components. The manufacturer of the lifting components will indicate what should be checked. Checks should also be undertaken at the end of the working day, as lifting components such as the chains may have been damaged during use. For example, if one of the lifting chains had become trapped between the hook and a loaded skip during a lift, the chain could become deformed or damaged, which can weaken one or more chain links and possibly causing it to fail. As well as the components, a full function check of all the lifting hydraulic controls should be undertaken before work commences. Early recognition of a defect means that repairs can be made before the start of a new working shift or day.
- A requirement under the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Regulations (LOLER) 1998 is for a lift planner/appointed person to devise a lift plan for all the lifting operations that are to be carried out. Amongst many factors, the lift plan would have identified all the risks and measures to be taken, the expected weight and types of loads, and locations which may contain proximity hazards, such as poor ground. It is also important that the operator has been informed of the contents, the actions required of them and who must take note of the plan.

## Working safely and at height *(Working at height)*

Topic scoring information: 4 correct answers required out of 7 questions presented to pass

- The reversing of vehicles is still a significant factor in accidents, injuries and fatalities in the workplace, and skip handlers can spend a fair proportion of their working time where there is both people and vehicle movement. Guidance recommends that reversing is, as the first course of action, eliminated. Where this is not reasonably practicable, such as when skip handlers need to reverse up to the placing or retrieval area, then other measures must be taken. The next step is to minimise any reversing to a minimum and to keep it within a segregated, controlled area where pedestrians or other movements are restricted during the operation.
- Additional vision aids such as mirrors and CCTV systems are fitted to provide some assistance for additional vision. However, the operator needs to be aware that each vision aid can have limitations. For example, CCTV systems are commonly used but they can be ineffective in strong sunlight. Mirrors for reversing are now mainly of the convex type as they provide a wider field of vision compared with conventional mirrors.
- Where there is unavoidable public access or movement in an area where a skip or container needs to be placed, the actual landing area must be segregated from pedestrians, who are normally oblivious to the associated dangers. If a container is being placed or retrieved where the operator cannot fully see the landing

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or lifting point, an authorised assistant should act as a marshaller. A code of signals should be agreed between the operator and marshaller before the work commences and should be in a safe place during the operation. If the operator loses sight of marshaller, they should stop immediately and check their location before continuing work.

- Conditions on site need to be taken into account before, during and after work. The skip handler must be kept well clear of any overhead power lines. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive advises that at least 9 metres plus the maximum height of the lifting arm or arms is kept from power lines mounted on wooden poles. If a skip or container needs to be placed within the stated distances, the electricity distribution company must be consulted in the first instance.
- The weight of a loaded skip or container should be calculated or established before it is lifted, to and includes the weight of the skip or container and the load. Where a loaded skip is to be retrieved, if the lift chains are not centrally located above the skip, as the weight is taken during the lift, the skip will start to centralise itself and could be dragged along the surface. The skip could snag or catch on an indentation in the surface, causing excessive swing when it comes free, which can overload the lifting components or cause the vehicle to become unstable.
- Prior to travelling on the public highway, the contents of the skip or container need to be checked to ensure they are stable, secure and restrained. In some cases, this may mean that the operator needs to climb into the skip or container and onto the surface of the load. If so, they need to take care as voids or soft areas within the load can cause slips, or trips, falls and possible injury.
- When tipping or discharging a load from a skip, the operator needs to ensure that the tipping hooks are correctly located with the catch bars on the skip. Skips have dislodged from the catch bars when being tipped, resulting in the partially or fully loaded skip swinging violently, which can cause the vehicle to become unstable. When depositing the load from a container, before the rear doors are released, the operator should check that the load is not placing excessive pressure on the doors and that they stand well clear of the load discharge path when the doors are released.
- The majority of skip handlers are equipped with a pair of rear stabilisers which need to be lowered sufficiently to support the weight of the load when it is to be lifted. Excessive lowering of the stabilisers can result in the rear wheels of the vehicle being raised off the ground. In several instances, the vehicle has been parked on an incline and when the rear wheels have been clear of the ground, the vehicle has moved unintentionally as the raised wheels are unable to prevent vehicle movement because the parking brake is only activated on the rear wheels,. To prevent this occurrence, all wheels must be chocked before the stabilisers are lowered.

## Travelling on the road *(Travelling)*

**Topic scoring information: 1 correct answer required out of 2 questions presented to pass**

- Skip handlers, as part of their working time, travel on the public highway. This means that Road Traffic Act requirements need to be followed. Before joining the public highway, the total height of the vehicle and load, when it is above 3 metres, must be, under the Road Traffic Act, displayed clearly in the cab. The overall height should be checked to ensure that it is stated correctly in the cab. Bridge strikes by over-height vehicles are common. Bridges with a clearance of less than 16 feet 6 inches/5.03 metres are marked with the maximum permitted vehicle height. Bridges with a full or partial arch tend to have goal posts or markers which the vehicle must keep between. **Note:** *Network Rail guidance states that bridge markings are applied where the clearance is less than 16 feet 3 inches/4.95 metres.*
- If a skip handler does strike a railway bridge, the operator or other people must immediately call the telephone number shown on the bridge, quoting the bridge number. All loads must be secure, as loose or insufficiently secured loads are an offence under the Road Traffic Act. Irrespective of cause, it is the operator (driver) who would be liable for prosecution.
- When travelling to a site or whilst on a site, the vehicle may need to travel on temporary roadways, haul roads and inclines, which in most cases do not have kerbs. Driving too close to the edge of a temporary or minor roadway can cause its sides to collapse and vehicles have been known to overturn when coming too close.

Cornering at too high a speed has also caused vehicle instability. A loaded skip raises the vehicle's centre of gravity, making it more likely to overturn than an unloaded vehicle.

## Stability and load security *(Stability)*

Topic scoring information: 1 correct answer required out of 3 questions presented to pass

- Skip handlers generally can only lift skips or containers when the vehicle is level both longitudinally (forward/backward) and laterally (sideways). Where the skip handler is lifting a loaded skip crossways on an incline, the skip will swing towards the downhill side of the slope, which can cause the vehicle to overturn. If a loaded skip is being retrieved and the vehicle is facing uphill (the skip being on the downward side of the slope), the increase in radius means that the weight is concentrated to the rear, which can cause the vehicle to rear up.
- When lifting a loaded skip or container, even on level ground, the least stable state of the vehicle is when the lift arm or arms have taken the full weight of the skip or container e.g. it is just clear of the ground. Stability improves as the load is lifted and placed onto the vehicle bed. It is at the point of lift that the stabilisers apply maximum bearing pressure to the ground. Where the ground is unable to effectively support the weight, then instability can occur as one or both stabilisers can sink into the soft ground. A competent person should check the ground to ensure that it can support the weight of the vehicle and load, and that there are no underground services, such as ducting, or voids before lifting work begins. Spreader plates may be specified, which can reduce some of the ground-bearing pressure applied by the stabilisers.
- Retrieving partially loaded containers has caused issues when the load has been concentrated at the front of the container which, while at the maximum angle when being drawn onto the vehicle, has resulted in the load in moving rearwards and causing the vehicle to become unstable.