



BITA figures show significant downturn in UK industrial truck sales

The British Industrial Truck Association (BITA), the UK's sole provider of industrial truck sales statistics, has announced overall UK sales figures for the final quarter of 2008.

The latest figures contributed by BITA members show that UK orders for forklift trucks decreased by 14.5% during 2008 with no sign of a swift recovery.

In total, just over 26,500 new forklift truck unit orders were placed with BITA members in 2008, the lowest quantity since 2001. More significantly, the number of new forklift trucks ordered in the fourth quarter of 2008, at a little over 4,700, was the lowest quarterly total since the final three months of 1993, during the depths of the last major market recession.

In the final quarter of 2008, orders for reach trucks fell by 20.1%, low level order pickers fell by 16.9% and powered pallet truck orders fell by 11.5%. Overall orders for warehouse trucks fell by 16.1%.

The number of engine counterbalance trucks ordered in the UK was also disappointing, with a 13.5% fall in 2008's final three months, coupled with an 11.2% fall in electric counterbalance trucks. The overall fall in counterbalance truck orders was 12.7%.

These figures contrast sharply with 2007, which was one of the industry's best years to date and the fourth consecutive year in which more than 30,000 forklift trucks were ordered from UK suppliers. The economic climate did not start to affect forklift truck sales until the second part of 2008. Just over 8,000 orders were placed in the first three months of the year, and around 7,500 placed in quarter two, but sales then fell sharply, with 6,000 orders in quarter three, followed by a slump to 4,700 for the final three months.

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Commenting on the latest statistics, BITA Secretary General James Clark said: “Disappointing as they are, these figures reflect an overall slowdown across the UK and global economies. As one might expect, the forklift market mirrors key industries such as manufacturing and sales. Early figures for 2009 do show a continued fall in order levels, and it is difficult to predict how quickly the UK forklift truck market will recover and return to the exceptional levels of success enjoyed by the industry in recent years.

“However, the lift truck industry is resilient, made up of stalwarts who have been in the field a very long time. Their experience and knowledge will undoubtedly help companies weather the storm, and BITA will remain a firm support to our members through these tough economic times.”

Knowledge of market trends is crucial for any business, but in the UK, BITA is the sole provider of industrial truck sales statistics, contributed by – and only made available to – BITA members. BITA thus holds a unique repository of information on the current state and historical trends of the UK fork-lift market.

Details of UK orders and deliveries are reported every month by members of BITA’s Truck Suppliers’ Group (TSG), using exclusive secure PC software. Aggregated monthly and year-to-date figures are made available on a confidential basis to all contributing TSG members. Members of BITA’s Components & Services Group also receive a monthly statistical overview, with the option to purchase more detailed information as required.

BITA members are thus equipped with vital knowledge of how the market is moving – a real asset when planning production levels and business strategy.

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Issued on behalf of BITA.

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