

Front lift driver

Job Description

A free job description template for the Waste management industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This front lift driver job description template reflects Australian workplace standards and waste industry practice at the time of publication. It is a general guide only and does not constitute legal advice. Confirm the applicable classification, licence requirements and pay rate against the Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043) and the actual duties of the role before advertising. For complex coverage questions, seek independent legal or HR advice.

1. Position overview

A front lift driver services commercial bins using forks mounted on the front of the vehicle, lifting each bin over the cab and tipping it into the hopper. The runs are commercial rather than residential — shopping centres, industrial estates, hospitality precincts — and they are usually timed to finish before those businesses open.

The vehicles are larger and the environments tighter than kerbside work, which is why the Waste Management Award places front lift operators at Level 6 alongside articulated vehicle drivers and rigid vehicles over 30 tonnes.

2. Key responsibilities

Service commercial front-lift bins

Work a commercial route lifting and tipping bins from the cab using the front fork system.

Manoeuvre in confined commercial yards

Position the vehicle accurately in loading docks, car parks and laneways with limited clearance.

Check overhead clearance before lifting

Confirm there are no awnings, cables or structures in the lift path before raising a bin.

Identify contamination and overloading

Recognise bins that are contaminated or too heavy to lift safely and report rather than force the lift.

Complete pre-start and post-trip checks

Inspect the vehicle and the fork and hopper hydraulics before departure and on return.

Weigh in and dispose correctly

Present at the weighbridge, record against the correct customer and stream, and tip at the licensed facility.

3. Skills and attributes

- Large vehicle precision: Positions a heavy vehicle accurately in confined commercial environments.
- Overhead hazard awareness: Checks the lift path every time, because a fouled lift damages property and the vehicle.
- Schedule discipline: Completes commercial runs inside the window before businesses open.
- Safety judgement: Declines an unsafe lift rather than attempting it under time pressure.
- Commercial customer contact: Deals with centre management and business owners about access and bin condition.
- Hydraulic awareness: Recognises fork and hopper faults that mean the vehicle should return to the depot.

4. Qualifications and requirements

Requirements for front lift driver positions vary by operator and vehicle class. These are the credentials Australian waste employers ask for most often.

- Heavy Rigid (HR) licence (required) — Minimum for front-lift vehicles; many operators require Heavy Combination (HC) for larger units.
- Front-lift vehicle experience — Commonly required. Operators generally want demonstrated experience with fork-mounted collection systems.
- Pre-employment medical and drug screen — Commonly required. Standard for heavy vehicle roles.
- Fatigue management training — Commonly required. Reflects the early starts and long commercial runs.
- Certificate III in Driving Operations — Desirable. Supports progression to articulated and B-double classes.
- First aid certificate — Desirable. Valued on crews working alone across a commercial round.

5. Working conditions

- Very early starts to finish commercial runs before businesses open
- Confined loading docks, car parks and laneways with overhead hazards
- Outdoor work in all weather, with repeated cab entry and exit
- Exposure to odour, dust and noise, with PPE provided
- Weekend work on some commercial and hospitality rounds
- Fatigue management obligations under heavy vehicle law

6. Award information

Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043)

Most front lift driver positions in Australia are covered by the Waste Management Award 2020 (MA000043). This role generally sits at Level 6, which pays \$1,240.98 a week or \$32.66 an hour for full-time and part-time employees, and \$40.83 an hour for casuals, from 1 July 2026. See the full Waste Management Award pay guide for every classification, penalty rate and allowance.

The rates include the industry allowance

Fair Work publishes these rates with the \$3.24 per hour industry allowance already included, because clause 16.2(b) makes it an all-purpose allowance — payable for all purposes including overtime and shift rates. Rate sites that strip it out quote a Level 1 rate around \$26.63 instead of \$30.11, and every penalty calculated from that lower base is understated.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does a front lift driver do?

A front lift driver services commercial bins using forks mounted on the front of the truck, lifting each bin over the cab and tipping it into the hopper. Runs are commercial — shopping centres, industrial estates and hospitality precincts — and usually timed to finish before those businesses open.

Q: What award level is a front lift driver?

Level 6 under the Waste Management Award, alongside articulated vehicle drivers, rigid vehicles over 30 tonnes and SOLO grab-operated collection.

Q: How is front lift different from side lift collection?

Side lift services residential bins from the kerb using an arm on the side of the vehicle. Front lift services larger commercial bins using forks at the front, lifting the bin over the cab. Front lift vehicles are bigger, the environments are tighter, and the award rates them a level higher.

Q: Why do front lift runs start so early?

Because commercial bins sit in loading docks and car parks that need to be clear before the business opens and customers arrive. The award's 4.00am ordinary-hours span accommodates this, so an early start is ordinary time rather than overtime.

Pay and award

Q: How much does a front lift driver earn in Australia?

Under the Waste Management Award 2020, a front lift driver at Level 6 earns a minimum of \$1,240.98 a week or \$32.66 an hour as a full-time or part-time employee, and \$40.83 an hour as a casual, from 1 July 2026. These are legal minimums — many operators pay above them, and penalties apply for weekend, shift and overtime work.

Q: Do early starts attract a penalty rate?

Not inside the ordinary-hours span. The award opens ordinary hours at 4.00am, so a pre-dawn start is ordinary time at 100%. Paying a penalty for every early start is the most common overpayment in waste payroll. See the award guide for the full span.

Q: What are the weekend and public holiday rates?

Saturday is 150% for the first two hours then 200%, Sunday is 200%, and a public holiday is 250% — with Good Friday and Christmas Day higher again at 300%. Casual rates add 25 percentage points to each, except overtime, which adds 10.

Q: What is the minimum shift length?

Four hours. Casual employees have a minimum daily engagement of 4 hours and part-time employees must be paid a minimum of 4 hours for each day worked.

Hiring and rostering

Q: How do I write a front lift driver job ad?

Start from this template, then add the specific vehicle class, site and start time. Candidates for waste roles self-select strongly on start time and equipment, so being vague costs you good applicants. Our guide to writing a job description covers the structure.

Q: How do I keep licences current across a crew?

Store each licence and endorsement against the employee with its expiry date and get warned in advance — see licence and certification management. Rostering someone onto a task they are no longer certified for is the employer's exposure.

Q: How do I roster around early starts fairly?

Publish rosters with enough notice, rotate the earliest starts across the crew, and track actual versus rostered hours so the load is visible. Our guide to rostering waste collection staff walks through it.

Q: Can RosterElf track depot clock-ins?

Yes. GPS geofences around each depot or transfer station record where and when a shift actually started against what was rostered — the comparison an early-start or overtime question turns on months later.