

The right mindset

Bill Allen, forklift truck operator for United Pallet Network (UPN) still enjoys his job after almost 25 years working night shifts.

Based out of UPN's headquarters in Fradley Park, Bill Allen spends his night shifts loading and unloading pallets from which are trunked in and out of the UPN Hub. Bill starts at 8pm, with a half-hour break at 11.30pm. He is paid for an eight-hour shift, but often finishes early. "In the trade we call it job and knock," he says. "You clock off when you've finished the job. Sometimes that is half an hour early, but also sometimes you work a little bit longer – you always stay until the job is done. I don't mind staying on to do a bit extra when I know they'll let me go early another time. You have to be flexible."

Modern forklifts come with more safety features to assist operators – and are more ergonomic. "The forklifts are a lot better now, much more comfortable," says Bill. "I've got 900 hours in on my new gas-powered truck and I really like it. They are surprisingly quiet, too."



Bill worked at a coal mine for 20 years, which is where he qualified as a forklift truck driver. He left when his pit closed in 1991 and went to work for a dairy before moving into the world of palletised goods logistics. He has worked night shifts for almost 25 years. "Working nights really suits me," he says. "I really enjoy it – I'd go as far as to say it keeps me sane, actually."

"I'm 67 years old so I don't have to work, I do it because I still love my job. And these days I'm more of a night owl, I'm no fan of getting up in the morning! I have also always liked having the weekends off to do as I please, which is one of the other benefits of night shifts in this business."

"The pay is decent and I would definitely recommend it as a job. I have done it for years because I enjoy it and most of my mates here are the same. However, you have to have the right mindset for it. Some people make the mistake of thinking it's easy, but you've got to use your head. There are a lot of factors to take into consideration when you're driving a forklift."

"I've always said that you get your ticket, then you really start learning how to drive a forklift. We are working in a busy environment, to tight deadlines, but you still have to always put safety first."