

Stevedore interview questions

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What to expect

Stevedore interviews focus on safety, equipment operation and teamwork under pressure. You will likely face a mix of process, behavioural, scenario and technical questions, often with a safety lens.

- **Process:** Questions that ask you to walk through a routine task, such as moving a container or lashing cargo, to see if you follow a logical, safe sequence.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past experiences, especially around safety, teamwork or handling pressure. Expect to use STAR.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations like equipment breakdowns or weather delays, testing your judgement and problem-solving in real time.
- **Technical:** Questions on specific equipment, software or procedures, such as crane controls, Navis N4 or customs documentation.
- **Safety:** Direct questions about hazard identification, incident reporting and compliance with MSIC, quarantine and worksite rules.

The interview usually starts with a brief introduction and site or role overview. Then you will move through a mix of the question types above, often with a practical or walk-through component. Some employers include a short safety quiz or a plant operation assessment. You will usually get time to ask questions at the end.

1. Walk me through how you operate a gantry crane to move a container from a ship to a truck.

Why they ask

This tests your process knowledge and safety awareness for the core task of the role.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: pre-start checks, communication with the ship and truck, crane movement, placement and post-move checks.

Example answer

"First, I complete a pre-start check on the crane, including controls, brakes and spreader. I confirm the load plan and radio the ship supervisor for the next container. I move the crane into position, lower the spreader, engage the twistlocks and lift once I get the all-clear. I travel along the gantry, watching for personnel and obstructions, then lower the container onto the truck trailer. I release the twistlocks, confirm the truck driver has cleared, and record the move in Navis N4. After each cycle I do a quick visual check of the spreader and lashing gear."

2. Tell me about a time you identified a safety hazard on the wharf. What did you do?

Why they ask

Safety is non-negotiable in stevedoring, so they want to see you act on hazards, not ignore them.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"During a night shift, I noticed a container with a damaged corner casting waiting to be loaded. The twistlock would not have seated properly. I stopped the loading sequence, radioed my supervisor and isolated the container with cones and tape. I logged the defect in the terminal system and informed

the lashing team. The container was pulled for inspection and replaced with another unit. No one was hurt, and the ship departed on time because we caught it early."

3. You arrive for a shift and the straddle carrier you're assigned has a hydraulic leak. What do you do?

Why they ask

This scenario tests your judgement under pressure and your commitment to equipment safety.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: assess, isolate, report, follow up.

Example answer

"I would not operate the machine. First, I would park it in a safe area away from traffic and put on hazard lights. Then I would place a spill kit around the leak to contain the hydraulic fluid. I would radio the shift supervisor and the maintenance team, giving them the machine number and location. I would log the defect in the terminal system and check if another straddle carrier is available. I would also make sure the spill is cleaned up before the machine is moved. I would not resume operation until maintenance signs it off."

4. How do you ensure correct lashing and unlashings of cargo, especially when weather is poor?

Why they ask

Lashing is a core task and weather adds risk. They want to see a systematic, safety-first approach.

How to structure your answer

Explain your method: planning, communication, checking, and re-checking.

Example answer

"Before starting, I check the lashing plan and confirm the number and type of lashings needed for each stack. In poor weather, I wear the right wet-weather gear and non-slip boots, and I keep my radio close. I work in pairs when possible, and we call out each step. I make sure every twistlock is fully engaged and every lashing rod is tight. After lashing, I do a second walk-around to check nothing has loosened. If the wind picks up beyond safe limits, I stop and report to the supervisor so we can reassess."

5. Describe a time you had to coordinate with a truck driver who was frustrated about delays. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

Stevedores work with truck drivers daily, so they want to see you can stay calm and professional under pressure.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Example answer

"A driver had been waiting over an hour because a rail movement was blocking his lane. He was angry and started yelling. I stayed calm, introduced myself and explained the delay was due to a rail shunt that was nearly finished. I gave him a realistic time frame and offered him a water while he waited. I also radioed the rail supervisor to confirm the lane would clear in ten minutes. Once the lane opened, I guided him to the correct bay and thanked him for his patience. He calmed down and left without further issue."

6. What steps do you take to comply with customs and quarantine requirements when inspecting containers?

Why they ask

Customs and quarantine are legal requirements. They need to know you follow procedures exactly.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your checklist and reporting process.

Example answer

"First, I check the container number against the manifest on my handheld terminal. I look for signs of pest infestation, soil, or unauthorised goods. If anything looks unusual, I do not open the container. I seal it and report to the quarantine officer or customs broker as per terminal procedure. I record the inspection in the system, including photos if required. I also ensure my MSIC is current and visible, and that I follow any biosecurity directions, like cleaning boots or equipment before moving to another area."