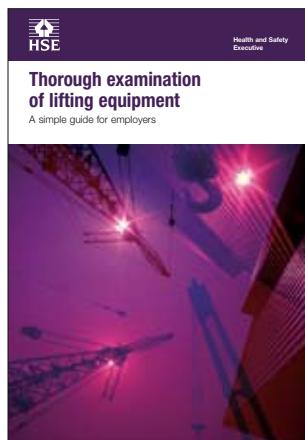


# Thorough examination of lifting equipment

A simple guide for employers



*This is a web-friendly version  
of leaflet INDG422*

## Introduction

If you are an employer or self-employed person providing lifting equipment for use at work, or if you have control of the use of lifting equipment, you must make sure the lifting equipment is safe. The main requirements for you as a 'duty holder' are in the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER).

This leaflet provides advice on the options you have under LOLER relating to the requirement for thorough examination and inspection of lifting equipment and explains the benefits of having an 'examination scheme'. However, this does not replace the necessity for operators to carry out checks to lifting equipment and accessories before use.

## What does LOLER require?

LOLER addresses the specific risks associated with the use of lifting equipment. Thorough examination and inspection are key requirements of the Regulations. To meet these requirements, duty holders must:

- ensure lifting equipment (including lifting accessories) exposed to conditions causing deterioration which could lead to dangerous situations undergoes regular thorough examination by a competent person; and
- ensure all supplementary inspections and tests recommended by the competent person are carried out within the timescale stated.

Examples of conditions causing deterioration are wet, abrasive or corrosive environments.

## What equipment is covered by LOLER?

The scope of the Regulations is very wide and includes a range of equipment (see Table 1 for some examples). There are two important definitions you need to know:

- 'lifting equipment' means work equipment for lifting and lowering loads. The definition includes attachments used to anchor, fix or support the equipment (eg the runway of an overhead crane);
- 'accessory for lifting' means lifting equipment for attaching loads to machinery for lifting.

<b>Lifting equipment</b>
Cranes
Workplace passenger and goods lifts
Construction hoists
Dumb waiters
Scissors lifts
Vehicle tail lifts
Bath hoists
Stairlifts
Telehandlers and industrial lift trucks
Vehicle lifts
<b>Accessories for lifting</b>
Slings
Hooks
Shackles
Eyebolts
Ropes used for climbing or work positioning

**Table 1** Equipment covered by LOLER

### **What equipment is not covered by LOLER?**

Some equipment used in lifting is not covered by LOLER. Where this is the case, you would still have duties under PUWER to ensure the work equipment is safe and suitable, for example:

- equipment whose principal function is not lifting, for example conveyor belts or the three-point linkage on a tractor;
- items such as pallets, skips, ladles, one-trip slings attached to a load and similar containers, which are considered part of the load.

For lifting equipment used mainly by members of the public (such as lifts in shopping centres or train stations), you do not have duties under PUWER or LOLER. However, you still have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure the equipment is safe. Following the requirements in LOLER will help you meet those duties.

If you have any doubts about whether your lifting equipment is covered by the Regulations, contact HSE's Infoline (see 'Further information' on the back cover).

## What is thorough examination?

A thorough examination is a systematic and detailed examination of the lifting equipment by a **competent person** to detect any defects that are, or might become, dangerous.

The competent person will determine the scope of the thorough examination and they may use a number of sources to help them do this, such as industry guidance. HSE's Contract Research Report *Thorough examination and inspection of particular items of lifting equipment* (CRR429) may also be a useful reference tool (see 'Find out more').

## Who is a 'competent person'?

A competent person:

- should have enough appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the lifting equipment so that they can detect defects or weaknesses, and assess how important they are in relation to the safety and continued use of the equipment;
- should not be the same person who performs routine maintenance as they would be responsible for assessing their own work;
- should be sufficiently independent and impartial to make objective decisions;
- may be employed by a separate company, or selected by an employer from members of their own staff.

## How often must lifting equipment and accessories be thoroughly examined?

You must have lifting equipment thoroughly examined:

- **before using it for the first time** – unless the equipment has an EC Declaration of Conformity less than one year old and was not assembled on site. If it was assembled on site, it must be examined by a competent person to establish the assembly was correct and safe, eg a platform lift installed in a building;
- **after assembly and before use at each location** for equipment that requires assembly or installation before use, eg tower cranes;
- **regularly in service** if the equipment is exposed to conditions causing deterioration that is likely to result in dangerous situations. If this applies to your equipment you have a choice (see Table 2). You can arrange for the thorough examination to be carried out:
  - at regular intervals (either at least every 6 months or 12 months depending on whether the lifting equipment is for lifting people or not); or
  - in accordance with an **examination scheme** drawn up by a competent person.

Accessories for lifting must be thoroughly examined either at least every 6 months or in accordance with an examination scheme.

Type of equipment	6 months	12 months	Examination scheme
Accessory for lifting	✓		✓
Equipment used to lift people	✓		✓
All other lifting equipment		✓	✓

**Table 2** In-service examination periods

**Always** have lifting equipment thoroughly examined following ‘exceptional circumstances’, eg if it is damaged or fails, is out of use for long periods, or if there is a major change in how it is used which is likely to affect its integrity.

## **What is an examination scheme?**

An examination scheme involves a thorough examination and would include a detailed schedule of checks, appropriate examination techniques and testing requirements, drawn up to suit the operating conditions of a specific item of lifting equipment. This can help ensure that the resources you spend more accurately reflect the level of risk. The examination scheme:

- should identify the parts of the lifting equipment to be thoroughly examined;
- can cover a number of similar items subject to the same operating conditions, eg all the lifting accessories in a factory which are sufficiently similar in age and subjected to similar amounts of use;
- may often specify periods that are different (longer or shorter) from the ‘periodic’ examination intervals (ie 6 or 12 months), but a longer period must be based on a rigorous assessment of the risks;
- can be drawn up by the user, owner, manufacturer or some other independent person, as long as they have the necessary competence;
- should be reviewed regularly, during each thorough examination and after any event that may alter the risks associated with the lifting equipment. You must inform the competent person of any incidents that may affect the risks associated with the use of the equipment.

## **When should lifting equipment be inspected?**

Under LOLER, lifting equipment may also need to be inspected at suitable intervals **between** thorough examinations. This is usually where your risk assessment has identified a significant risk from the use of the equipment. If they are required:

- the scope and frequency will depend on the opinion of the competent person;
- most manufacturers of lifting equipment can provide a guide on how often inspections should take place;
- inspections would normally include visual and functional checks;
- inspections should be regular (eg weekly, monthly or quarterly) and they are normally carried out on machinery (eg cranes). Lifting accessories such as chains or slings will not normally require an inspection as long as they receive a thorough examination at the appropriate interval and a proper pre-use check;
- the schedule of inspections should be included in any examination scheme.

## **Do I need to have the non-lifting parts of the equipment inspected?**

Yes. PUWER requires all work equipment that is exposed to conditions causing deterioration which may result in dangerous situations to be inspected. For some lifting equipment, such as forklift trucks, you will need to inspect both the distinct lifting elements as well as the non-lifting elements.

Using a forklift truck as an example:

- the thorough examinations and supplementary inspections (where required) will be carried out under LOLER and limited to the lifting mechanism (eg the chains and forks);

- inspection under PUWER will be limited to the non-lifting parts such as the brakes, lights, and fall-over protection;
- the maintenance of both the lifting and non-lifting parts of the truck will be carried out under PUWER.

In cases like these, the LOLER and PUWER inspection procedures can be combined if appropriate. Your competent person can advise you on this, and you can get further information from the British Industrial Truck Association (BITA), the Fork Lift Truck Association (FLTA) and the Safety Assessment Federation (SAFed) – see ‘Find out more’.

### **Are thorough examinations or inspections the same as routine maintenance?**

No. Routine maintenance typically involves checking and replacing worn or damaged parts, lubrication, replacing time-expired components, topping up fluid levels, and making routine adjustments. This is to ensure the equipment continues to operate as intended, and risks associated with wear or deterioration are avoided.

**Thorough examination may indicate areas of poor maintenance, but is not intended to replace it.** You should not wait for the results of a thorough examination before carrying out maintenance on your lifting equipment. Maintenance is a requirement under PUWER and applies to all work equipment including lifting equipment.

### **Do I need to keep records?**

Yes. You must keep records of all thorough examinations and inspections for all your lifting equipment (see Table 3).

The competent person must provide you with a **written report of thorough examination** and any inspections or tests they do. The report will identify if there are defects and what you must do to put them right. Schedule 1 of LOLER sets out what information must be in the report (see ‘Find out more’ for details of the LOLER Approved Code of Practice which includes the full text of the Regulations).

Type of examination or inspection	How long to keep records
Thorough examination before first use.	Lifting equipment – until the employer ceases to use the lifting equipment.  Lifting accessories – for two years.
Thorough examination before use where the safety of the equipment depends on the installation conditions.	Until the equipment is no longer in use at the place where it was installed/assembled.
In-service thorough examination (6-monthly, 12-monthly or examination scheme).	Until the next report is made or two years, whichever is the later.
In-service inspections/tests.	Until the next report is made.

**Table 3** Record-keeping

## **What happens if defects are found in the lifting equipment?**

- If the competent person finds a defect with the lifting equipment during the thorough examination and/or inspection which in their opinion is, or could become, a danger to people, they must tell you immediately and confirm this in the report of thorough examination/inspection.
- If the competent person discovers a defect that involves **an existing or imminent risk of serious personal injury**, then they must tell you immediately and send a copy of the report to the relevant enforcing authority (HSE or the local authority), even if the defects are remedied immediately. A competent person who fails to report a defect, simply because it has been remedied on the spot, is disguising a potentially dangerous situation.
- You must take action to rectify any defect you are told about. **If you are notified of a serious and significant defect, you must immediately take the lifting equipment out of service until the defect has been put right. If you do not, you will be breaking the law.**
- For defects that need to be rectified within a certain timescale, you must repair or replace the defective equipment within the specified time, and not use it after that time unless the defect has been satisfactorily put right.

## **Other duties**

This leaflet provides information about the thorough examination and inspection requirements of LOLER. You have additional duties under LOLER (such as marking of lifting equipment and organising the lifting operation), as well as other health and safety laws. For example, you have a duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to carry out a risk assessment (see *Five steps to risk assessment* in ‘Find out more’).

## **Find out more**

*Safe use of lifting equipment. Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L113*  
HSE Books 1998 ISBN 978 0 7176 1628 2 (reprinted 2007)

*Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22* (Third edition)  
HSE Books 2008 ISBN 978 0 7176 6295 1

*Simple guide to the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998*  
Leaflet INDG290 HSE Books 1999 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg290.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg290.pdf)

*Simple guide to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998*  
Leaflet INDG291 HSE Books 1999 (single copy free or priced packs of 15  
ISBN 978 0 7176 2429 4) [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg291.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg291.pdf)

*Thorough examination and inspection of particular items of lifting equipment*  
CRR429 HSE Books 2002 ISBN 978 0 7176 2349 5  
[www.hse.gov.uk/research/crr\\_htm/2002/CRR02429.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/crr_htm/2002/CRR02429.htm)

*Thorough examination and testing of lifts: Simple guidance for lift owners* Leaflet  
INDG339(rev1) HSE Books 2008 (single copy free or priced packs of 10  
ISBN 978 0 7176 6255 5) [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg339.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg339.pdf)

*Five steps to risk assessment* Leaflet INDG163(rev2) HSE Books 2006  
(single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 978 0 7176 6189 3)  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)

*LOLER: How the regulations apply to agriculture* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS28 HSE Books 1998 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm)

*LOLER: How the regulations apply to forestry* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS29 HSE Books 1998 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm)

*LOLER: How the regulations apply to arboriculture* Agriculture Information Sheet AIS30(rev1) HSE Books 2006 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/agindex.htm)

A number of industry associations have also produced guidance on thorough examinations, including BITA ([www.bita.org.uk](http://www.bita.org.uk)) and FLTA ([www.fork-truck.org.uk](http://www.fork-truck.org.uk)), the Society of Operations Engineers (SOE) ([www.soe.org.uk](http://www.soe.org.uk)) (vehicle tail lifts), and the Safety Assessment Federation (SAFed) ([www.safed.co.uk](http://www.safed.co.uk)).

Guidance on the safe use of lifting equipment has also been produced by the Lifting Equipment Engineers' Association (LEEA) ([www.leea.co.uk](http://www.leea.co.uk)), the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) ([www.ipaf.org](http://www.ipaf.org)) and the Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) ([www.cpa.uk.net](http://www.cpa.uk.net)). You can find further information on their websites.

## **Further information**

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)  
(HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline  
Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577  
e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com) or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

**This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.**

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 15 from HSE Books, ISBN 978 0 7176 6305 7. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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