

Work and Lifting Equipment

Background

The definition of work equipment is very wide. It encompasses virtually every piece of equipment provided for use at work, such as knives, saws, hammers, photocopiers, computers, ladders, pressures washers and much more.

Lifting equipment means equipment used for the lifting and lowering of loads. It includes accessories and attachments needed as well as the lifting equipment itself, e.g. hoists, slings, fork lift trucks, goods lifts, scissor lifts, and so on.

If not properly controlled there can be a serious risk of injury from the use of work or lifting equipment, for users or people nearby.

Legislation

There are 3 main pieces of legislation in this area. [The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(HASAW\)](#) requires charities to ensure the health and safety of all workers and anyone who may be affected by their activities, so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes taking steps to ensure the safe use of work equipment and lifting equipment. Workers have a duty not to put themselves or others in danger through their actions i.e. by reckless behaviour when using work or lifting equipment and not following any training or instructions given.

[The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\)](#) lays down the requirements for work equipment to ensure it is used safely. It places this duty on charities regardless of whether the work equipment is owned or hired by them.



Work equipment has a very wide definition, beyond just tools, and could be anything equipment used at work

Image: Ellis Whittam



[The Lifting Operations Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 \(LOLER\)](#) specify the requirements for lifting equipment and lifting operations. Lifting operations are activities 'concerned with the lifting or lowering of a load'. This includes lifting people or objects. This legislation requires charities to ensure lifting operations are well planned, organised and carried out safely.

The HSE have produced a vast amount of advice and guidance in this area. There is a general guidance area for [leaflets and information on work equipment \(including lifting equipment\)](#).

Then for more specific information, there is a [dedicated work equipment webpage](#) and the [approved code of practice for PUWER](#). For lifting equipment, there is also a [dedicated lifting equipment webpage](#) and the [approved code of practice for LOLER](#).

The key requirements table outlines considerations for using work and lifting equipment safely, signposting to information where relevant. Some charities might find it helpful to put their approach on how to do this into a policy or procedure.

Key Requirements

Key Requirement	Content of requirement
<p>PUWER - Overview and what charities need to do</p>	<p>PUWER places several requirements on charities in terms of equipment provided for use. These requirements are summarised below. The HSE have also produced a basic guidance leaflet on this topic.</p> <p><u>Ensure work equipment is suitable for its intended use</u></p> <p>This means careful consideration is needed when selecting or purchasing work equipment, taking account of factors like the health and safety risks, working conditions, workers and work to be carried out.</p> <p><u>Ensure work equipment is maintained in a safe condition, and does not put people's health and safety at risk</u></p> <div data-bbox="363 1462 919 1854" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Work equipment needs to be well maintained and checked regularly to ensure it remains in good condition</i></p> <p>Photo: The Telegraph</p> <p>Work equipment will require regular ongoing maintenance. What is needed and the frequency of this will depend on what the item is and where it is used. The equipment's manual, the manufacturer's instructions or recommendations would provide information on what maintenance is needed. All maintenance should be carried out by a suitably competent person who could provide advice further advice on what is needed. Lower risk, less complex items may require less competence to maintain.</p>

Good records should be kept of any maintenance carried out, and any machine maintenance logs kept up to date.

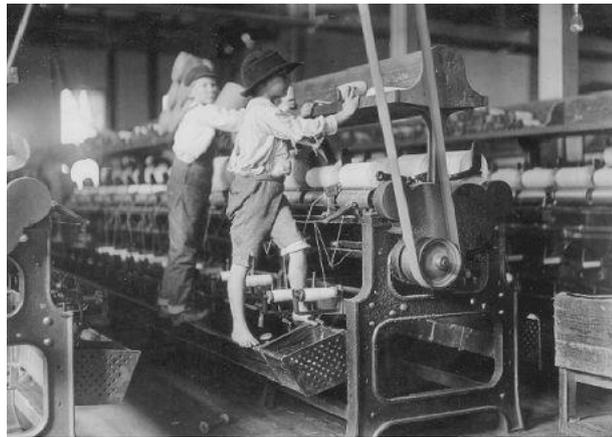
Inspected (in certain circumstances) to ensure that it remains safe for use

Work equipment requires regular ongoing visual checks to identify any issues present. What visual checks are required will depend on the item of work equipment, where it is used and what it is being used for. Viewing information sources about the product, such as the internet guidance, its manual, manufacturer’s instructions or recommendations, or similar would give you an idea of what is needed.

For lower risk items these visual checks could be carried out in house by a suitable capable or competent person, e.g. visual checks to ladders. Higher risk/more complex items may require the use of an external contractor or body to ensure the person carrying out the checks is competent. In some instances (e.g. higher risk equipment) it is also good practice to ensure that visual checks on work equipment are recorded.

The risks are controlled so far as is reasonably practicable

Suitable control measures will need to be in place to keep people safe. These control measures could be either hardware (i.e. a control that is normally fixed in place) or software (i.e. a control that usually relies on human behaviour) measures, like the examples shown in the table below. In most cases it would be likely a combination of these measures are needed.



Access to dangerous parts of work equipment should be prevented by guarding where possible

Photo: STEP

Hardware Measure	Software Measures
For fixed work equipment, a suitable initial installation, ensuring that it is stable/stabilised. Higher risk items, e.g. machinery, it should be inspected before its first use to ensure that it was installed correctly	Training * see notes below
Guarding of dangerous parts to prevent access * see notes below	Safe systems of work * see notes below
Marking with signs and safety notices	

Warning devices, e.g. audible or visual alarms	
Isolation measures for emergencies, like emergency stop buttons	
Suitable and easy to use controls for the equipment, e.g. starting, stopping and operating	
Personal protective equipment	

*Training – [PUWER](#) places specific requirements on charities relating to training. All people using, supervising or managing a piece of work equipment must be provided with adequate and clear health and safety information, instruction and training. The purpose of this is to make them aware of the hazards, risks and control measures involved in its use, enabling them to use it safely. The level and depth received will depend on the risks involved. This may include (where relevant) written instructions on its use, equipment markings, warnings or more formal training courses. The use of any work equipment should be restricted to people who have been trained on how to use it.



All people using, supervising or managing work equipment should be provided with adequate information, instructions and training

Photo: i Spark Solutions

*Guarding of dangerous parts – [PUWER](#) specifically requires measures to *fully* prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery. Where this is not possible (e.g. a circular saw, grass strimmer, etc) then it must be protected as far as possible and a safe system of work use.

*Safe systems of work – depending on the item of work equipment and its use a safe system of work will be needed. For higher risk items, e.g. machinery, there are also specific requirements to have a safety system of work in place for maintenance of it. This is to prevent injury from accidental activation whilst it is being maintained.

It is used in accordance with any specific requirements or any other relevant legislation

This requires consideration to be given to the requirements of other relevant legislation for work equipment. These other pieces of legislation may have their own requirements, testing and inspection regimes. Some examples of this are in the table below.

Legislation and Work Equipment	Basic Requirement
LOLER and lifting equipment	Sets out requirements for checks and ongoing (statutory thorough) examination of equipment, at a frequency decided by the type of lifting equipment or the person.
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and local exhaust ventilation	Sets out requirements for checks and ongoing (statutory thorough) examination of equipment on a 14 monthly basis, with some exceptions.
Pressure Systems Safety Regulations 2000 and pressure systems	Sets out requirements for checks and ongoing examination of equipment, at a frequency decided by the competent person.

There are situations when other more specific requirements may also apply. These are for situations like [machinery](#) and [mobile work equipment](#), and these additional requirements are summarised on the HSEs website.

CE Marking of Work Equipment

Where relevant work equipment should be CE marked. CE marking is a declaration that a product conforms to recognised European standards. Examples of work equipment it is required on include:

- Certain electrical appliances
- Lifting equipment
- Machinery
- Personal protective equipment
- Other general products



The CE mark is required on some work equipment

Image: BSI Group

Where a CE mark is required, charities should not use an item that does not have one, as it could be defective or dangerous to use. The [HSEs dedicated webpage for this](#) and [FAQs](#) gives further examples of when a CE mark is needed and other information.

[LOLER](#) - Overview and what charities need to do

Lifting equipment and accessories are classed as work equipment, and therefore all the requirements on charities from [PUWER](#) (such as selecting the right equipment, guarding, suitable controls, training, maintenance, etc) still apply. In addition [LOLER](#) places several further requirements on them. These requirements are summarised below. The HSE have also [produced a basic guidance leaflet](#) on this topic.

Planning, organising and carrying out lifting operations safely

LOLER requires that that lifting operations are:

- Properly planned by a competent person
- Carried out by suitably trained or competent people
- Appropriately supervised, and
- Carried out in a safe manner

The key to effective planning is to have an assessment of the risks presented by the task and identify what is needed to carry it out safely. Consider what hazards would be presented by carrying out the lifting operations needed and how you could control them. Common hazards and issues from lifting operations might include:

- Trying to move weights that are too heavy, exceeding weight limits of equipment and accessories causing equipment failure.
- Untrained workers carrying out the lifting.
- Poorly planned lift, not considering problems with the load like its centre of gravity, how to lift it up safely or inherent dangers from the load.
- The lifting operation carried out incorrectly or poorly.
- Lifting equipment or the objects being struck or lifting striking people.
- Poor maintenance of equipment or accessories in use leading to failure.
- Increased risk of damage or deterioration over time from the work environment or use.



Lifting operations should be well planned

Image: Andrew Wittman

Consideration of these issues will help ensure the most appropriate equipment is selected for use and adequate precautions are put in place. The complexity of the planning and the extent of the resources used to manage risk must reflect the risk, complexity and difficulty of the lifting operation. Requirements are also more stringent when lifting equipment is used for lifting people.

Planning is also needed for what to do in worst case scenarios, such as equipment failures and major incidents, to help mitigate the impact of these events.

Training Needs for Lifting Operations

Adequate training is needed for those involved in lifting operations, including those supervising them. Lifting operations however can range from the very simple and commonplace (like using a goods lift) to very complex and complicated (like the use of cranes!) Lower risk and more straight forward operations may require minimal on the job planning and training. More complex operations may require sophisticated and detailed planning, high levels of expert input, monitoring and supervision.

Selecting the right lifting equipment

[LOLER](#) requires charities to ensure that the lifting equipment and accessories they select to use are suitable. This forms a major part of the planning process. When choosing what to select they should take account of:

- The necessary strength, stability needed
- What it will be used for and who by
- The environment to be used in
- Other relevant factors.

These add to the general obligations for selecting the right type for work equipment under [PUWER](#).

What about when it is in use?

When lifting operations take place, some important safety considerations are:

- That it equipment or accessories are not at risk of being damaged.
- There is no risk of the lifting equipment, accessories or loads lifted colliding with (or falling into) vehicles, objects or people.
- That lifting operations are appropriately supervised, by a suitably competent person.
- Work areas are clear, tidy and cordoned off from public access if relevant.
- The equipment and accessories are set up and used in line with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Safe working loads on lifting equipment and accessories are not exceeded.
- Unauthorised, untrained or unqualified people are not able to or allowed to use lifting equipment or set up accessories.



Keeping the work area clear and reducing the risk of colliding into objects is an important consideration for mobile lifting

Depending on the equipment's use, it might be possible to remove as many of these issues during the design and installation, e.g. goods or passenger lifts are generally sited in well away from areas where they could be damaged by vehicles.

Statutory [Thorough Examinations](#) of Lifting Equipment

These are the equivalent of an 'MOT' for lifting equipment. Lifting equipment needs to have a 'thorough examination' carried out in a number of situations, including:

- Before first use.
- Before use, when it has been reinstalled at another site.
- Where it exposed to conditions causing deterioration.
- And on an ongoing basis – 6 monthly for equipment that lifts people, 12 months for everything else.
- Or as often as recommended following a scheme drawn up by a competent person.

The defects identified in this thorough examination need to be attended when they relate to safety requirements. Records of the thorough examination should generally be kept for at least 2 years (depending on the type of examination).

As lifting equipment is classed as work equipment, the previously mentioned PUWER requirements for ongoing visual checks and planned maintenance also apply. Specifically however for lifting equipment and accessories charities should consider:

- Pre use checks (e.g. on slings) or daily checks (e.g. trucks).
- Weekly, monthly or other frequency ongoing checks to identify defects and maintenance needs.

Marking of lifting equipment

Lifting equipment and accessories need to be clearly marked with the maximum load they can lift or lower i.e. its 'safe working load'. If they can handle different amounts in different positions or situations, this also needs to be made clear.



Lifting equipment should be marked with its safe working load

Image: Legal Signs UK

Lifting equipment used for lifting people should be marked with both weight and give an indication of how many people this would be. If lifting equipment is not to be used for lifting people, and there is potential for this to occur in error e.g. a goods lift, it should be clearly marked.

Accessories of lifting equipment should also be marked to show anything that might effect the way they are used, e.g. the weight of their parts if significant or limitations on use.

Portable Appliance Testing

A common misconception in terms of portable appliance testing (PAT) is that electrical appliances need to be tested annually. This is something that the HSE have tried to dispel through their [myth of the month article on the subject](#).

In terms of PAT the frequency and type of any test is determined by the item itself, where it is used, how often it is moved, the risk of it being damaged and other relevant factors. Within their [guidance on PAT in low risk environments](#), the HSE have produced the table below which shows examples frequencies for various electrical items.



It is a myth that all electrical appliances need to be tested annually

Image: HSE

Equipment/environment	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and testing
Battery-operated: (less than 40 volts)	No	No	No
Extra low voltage: (less than 50 volts AC): Telephone equipment, low-voltage desk-lights	No	No	No
Desktop computers, VDU screens	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Photocopiers, fax machines: Not hand-held. Rarely moved	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No if double insulated, otherwise up to 5 years
Double insulated <input type="checkbox"/> (Class II) equipment: Not hand-held. Moved occasionally, eg fans, table lamps	No	Yes, 2–4 years	No
Double insulated <input type="checkbox"/> (Class II) equipment: Hand-held, eg some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 1 year	No
Earthed equipment (Class I): Electric kettles, some floor cleaners, some kitchen equipment and irons	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 1 year	Yes, 1–2 years
Cables (leads and plugs connected to the above) and mains voltage extension leads and battery-charging equipment	Yes	Yes, 6 months – 4 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to	Yes, 1–5 years depending on the type of equipment it is connected to

Image: HSE

Another common myth is that it needs to be carried out by an electrician. From the HSE's useful [FAQs section on PAT](#) on their website, they advise the following about training:

The person doing testing work needs to be competent to do it. In many low-risk environments, a sensible (competent) member of staff can undertake visual inspections if they have enough knowledge and training. However, when undertaking combined inspection and testing, a greater level of knowledge and experience is needed, and the person will need:

- *the right equipment to do the tests*
- *the ability to use this test equipment properly*
- *the ability to properly understand the test results*

It is important that suitable records should be kept of any training carried out by your in-house PAT testers, PAT machine calibration records and PAT that takes place.

Unique Challenges

When considering how to communicate and consult workers, there are some specific considerations needed based on typical charity settings, including:

- Volunteers bring in their own equipment.
- Workers by-passing safety measures, like guarding, on work equipment.
- Volunteers considering that [PUWER](#) does not apply, because they are not 'at work'.