

Safety with Hoists – Reminder for Organisations

Below is guidance as a reminder of the relevant legislation and to ensure compliance within an organisation. This is to help prevent incidents occurring and maintain good standards of safety using hoists and person handling slings and prevent incidents occurring.

Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER):

1. Equipment Maintenance and Examination:

- All equipment must be well-maintained, thoroughly examined, and undergo a LOLER check at least every six months. This requirement applies to both person-handling slings and mechanical equipment.
- Conduct a risk assessment on the use of all equipment and ensure staff are aware of any risks.

2. Staff Training and Competence:

- Staff using the equipment must be properly trained. Staff who have not been trained must NOT use hoisting equipment.
- Staff must also demonstrate confidence and competence in using the equipment safely. Competency checks can be carried out internally within the organisation or by an external assessor. The law states this must be completed by a “competent person”.

3. Pre-Use Checks:

- Staff must complete a pre-use check before operating the equipment and proceed to use the equipment only if no faults or areas of risk have been identified.
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The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (MHOR 1992 as amended 2002)

1. Risk Assessments:

- All manual handling tasks involving hoist users must have a completed risk assessment.
- These assessments must be person-centred, tailored to the individual being hoisted, and regularly updated whenever there is a change in the individual’s condition or the equipment being used.
- Risk assessments may be conducted internally or by an external assessor with the appropriate skills.
- Completing these risk assessments is a legal requirement.

2. Raising Concerns:

Staff must be able to promptly raise concerns about unsafe practices.

This applies to both:

- Methods of transfer that are believed to be unsafe.
- Concerns about other staff engaging in poor or unsafe practices.

- The organisation is obligated to respond and take action to reduce risks as far as is considered “reasonably practicable”.

3. Incident Reporting:

- Organisations must report and record accidents, incidents, and near-misses.
- Appropriate measures must be taken to address these issues and minimise the risk of recurrence.

Recommendations:

- Individuals who have not completed hoist training must not use the hoist, even in periods of short staffing. All hoisting tasks must be carried out by two trained members of staff.
- Ensure that all hoisting tasks are overseen by a confident and competent member of staff with experience in hoisting. Do not allow two newly trained members of staff to work together during hoisting. Always ensure that at least one member of staff has considerable experience in using the hoist and can demonstrate safe and proper use of the equipment.
- Foster a culture where staff feel comfortable raising concerns about hoisting or expressing a lack of confidence in using the equipment. Staff requiring additional training should be supported or allowed to work closely with experienced colleagues to build their confidence and competence in using the equipment safely.
- If staff are unsure or not 100% confident in their actions when using a hoist, they must seek guidance from an experienced member of staff.
- **Slings should not be shared between service users.** Each individual should have their own sling, which must be prescribed based on their size, the level of support they require, and the specific transfer being performed. It is essential that the sling being used is appropriately sized and suited to the service user’s needs.
- A pre-lift check, followed by a second check when the sling loops are under tension are required. This process should be routine to minimise the risk of errors and is taught during all hoist training sessions at Direct OT LTD.

Staff must ensure that:

1. The sling is correctly positioned.
2. The lower limbs are secured properly.
3. All waist straps and footplate straps on wheelchairs are disconnected.
4. Any attachments, such as peg feeds or catheters, are checked to avoid becoming caught during hoisting.

Please feel free to contact for further information, advice, concerns, training, risk assessments, hoisting competency tests or Occupational Therapy support.