

Equipment For Use At Work

Whatever equipment you provide for use at work must be safe and must be used safely. *The Provision of Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998* lay down requirements for all new work equipment. (Note that equipment provided for use by the public e.g. launderette equipment is not covered). As an employer you must ensure the following:

1. That the equipment is suitable for the purpose for which it is used

- Consider its design e.g. step ladders may be more appropriate than ladders; chairs for use with DSE may have particular design criteria (See *Advice Sheet 6: Display Screen Equipment*).
- Consider where it will be used and what extra hazards it may introduce e.g. the equipment may introduce noise; using a forklift truck to eliminate manual handling problems may introduce risks associated with machinery and operator safety.
- Ensure it is only used for what it was designed to do.

2. That the equipment is properly maintained and kept in good repair

- You may need to carry out routine or planned maintenance if lack of it could lead to the equipment failing dangerously e.g. examination and replacement of components in a lift or hoist could prevent a catastrophic failure.
- Where the safety of equipment is dependent on it's condition, and deterioration could lead to a significant risk to the operator then it must be subject to inspection by a competent person (see *Advice Sheet 3*). You must keep records of these inspections.
- It is a good idea to keep records of all maintenance work carried out.

3. That safe maintenance procedures are followed

- When maintenance operations are carried out the equipment should be shut down if there is likely to be a risk to health and safety. If not, then steps should be taken to enable it to be done without risk to health and safety, or a means of protection provided for persons who may be exposed to hazards.
- Consider providing temporary guards limited movement controls or some other safeguards.
- Personal protective equipment may be required.

4. That all staff are competent

- All persons who use or supervise the use of work equipment must have adequate information, instruction and training in using the equipment.
- Information and instruction must be readily understood by the persons concerned. It should cover foreseeable problems e.g. machinery breakdowns; dealing with operations faults.

5. Effective guarding

- There are requirements for effective guarding of any dangerous parts of machinery and for the prevention or control of certain specified hazards e.g. an article falling or being ejected from equipment or equipment catching fire or overheating.
- Find out if there are any guarding requirements for your equipment. Consult manufacturers or suppliers of the equipment.

Proper equipment controls

Where appropriate there must be provision of controls e.g. start, stop and emergency stop controls. When provided they must be:

- Clearly Visible.
- Readily identifiable.
- So positioned as not to cause a risk to health and safety.

6. A means of isolating equipment

A suitable means of isolating machines from their source of energy must also be provided if it is appropriate. It should be

- Clearly Visible.
- Readily identifiable.
- Secure i.e. not capable of inadvertent reconnection.

Additional Requirements

There are requirements relating to the following:

- Equipment must be stable where necessary e.g. by clamping.
- Suitable and sufficient lighting must be provided.
- Clearly visible markings must be provided for reasons of health and safety e.g. stop and start controls.
- Warnings and warning devices may be required, which should be unambiguous easily perceived and easily understood.

Further Information:

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and Approved Code of Practice L22(HSE) (ISBN 0 7176 1626-6). See Also Advice Sheet 9: Electricity at Work.

You should note that there are no specific requirements relating to particular types of equipment or installations that will take precedence over these Regulations. For example, an air compressor will require a written scheme of examination and regular inspections as required by the Pressure Systems and Transportable Gas Containers Regulations 1989.