

Health and Safety Bulletin

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Maintaining for health and safety

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) include two regulations that focus on maintaining equipment to an acceptable standard.

This recognizes that the original design and manufacture of work equipment (which includes unpowered hand tools such as hammers and knives, as well as single powered machines such as drills and trucks, lifting equipment such as hoists and series of machines connected together (such as a papermaking line)) may have met the highest standards, but if the equipment, and more specifically the safety devices, are not maintained at the same standard during normal use, the risks associated with operation will increase.

PUWER's requirements for maintenance standards

Regulation 5 requires employers to ensure equipment is maintained in efficient working order, and, that if it has a maintenance log book, this is kept up to date. The guidance accompanying this regulation indicates that maintenance frequencies should be decided based on

- The frequency of use and maximum length of time used
- Operating environment
- Variety of operations
- Risk to health and safety of malfunction or failure

Regulation 6 focuses on inspection and requires that employers ensure that where the safety of work equipment is dependent on installation conditions, it is inspected before its' first use. Additionally, where equipment is exposed to environmental conditions which could cause deterioration liable to result in dangerous situations, employers should also arrange for equipment to be inspected at suitable intervals (which may be after each occasion the circumstances which could cause a dangerous situation has occurred).

Various types of maintenance regimes exist from breakdown (ignore it until it goes wrong), to time-based maintenance (carrying out the work after a fixed time) and condition-based maintenance (monitoring relevant parameters on the equipment (e.g. running temperature, vibration) and completing maintenance when the readings indicate abnormal conditions). Both regulations suggest that the risk assessment, covering the use (which includes the maintenance and servicing of the equipment as well as operation) should provide the evidence used to determine the frequency and nature of the maintenance or inspections.

Conclusion

It is important, when buying work equipment, to consider how the equipment might fail in a way that creates health and safety risks and implement pragmatic preventative maintenance programmes to minimize this risk – which are also likely to make the equipment more reliable and productive!

Recently issued health and safety information:

- RR1205: Reviewing and updating the evidence base on the hazards and risks for musculoskeletal disorder symptoms and visual problems regulated by the Display Screen Equipment Regulations [Reviewing and updating the evidence base on the hazards and risks for musculoskeletal disorder symptoms and visual problems regulated by the Display Screen Equipment Regulations](#)
- RoSPA's electric vehicle fact sheet [Electric vehicles ScORSA Fact Sheet 12 by RoSPA - Flipsnack](#)
- Schedule of Common Lifts Guidance Document [Schedule-of-Lifts-NOCN-and-Industry-Lifting-Lead-AP-Group-Issue-1-2023.pdf](#)
- NZ Worksafe prevention and control of leptospirosis [Prevention and control of leptospirosis | WorkSafe](#)

HSE annual statistics

HSE has published their annual work-related health and safety statistics for work-related health and safety in GB, showing: -

- 1.7 million working people suffering from a work-related illness, of which
 - 776,000 workers were suffering work-related stress, depression or anxiety
 - 543,000 workers were suffering from a work-related musculoskeletal disorder
- 138 workers were killed in work-related accidents - the figure was 135 last year
- 61,663 injuries to employees were reported under RIDDOR
- 33.7 million working days were lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury

More details are available from the HSE's summary booklet [Health and safety statistics 2024](#)

Case Law update

This issue focuses on accidents associated with maintenance.

A company that grows mushrooms has been fined after an employee's right leg became trapped and was later amputated after it was caught by the rotating blades of a mushroom filling machine. The worker had climbed onto the machine to clean it when it was started. The company was found to have failed to adequately assess the operation and cleaning of the machine. It was fined **£73,333** and ordered to pay **£7,522** in costs

An aviation company has been fined **£160,000** and **£6,494** costs after a man was crushed to death at London Heathrow Airport during the unloading of baggage containers from an aircraft. He had arrived at the

stand with a set of trailers and was standing under a type of scissor lift known as a high-loader, when the high-loader operator lowered one of the hydraulic platforms and it crushed him. The high-loader did not have any engineering controls, such as sensors, to detect if people were underneath raised platforms and a defect on the trailers reported more than two weeks before the incident had not been actioned

A manufacturing company has been fined **£100,000** with **£7,688** costs after one of its experienced employees partially severed two fingers while trying to find a fault in an edge bander. Having failed to turn the machine off correctly before raising the interlocked guard to look inside, the

worker then stepped over two supporting rails and placed their fingers on a trimming unit, resulting in two being partially severed. The court found the company had failed to identify the risks presented by the cutting and trimming units

A food manufacturer's employee was crushed within an industrial cooking machine and suffered two broken ribs while clearing a water inlet. Investigations showed this was a regular activity that had not been risk assessed. The employer was fined **£130,000** with costs of **£2607**

Isolation of MEWP platform controls

During an investigation of a MEWP incident, the HSE has identified that there is an issue associated with isolating the controls when the platform is at height. Although the investigation is still ongoing they have issued a safety alert warning of the hazards of using the emergency stop button to isolate the controls in these circumstances.

With changes in the design of control panels, it is now recommended that the isolation of MEWP controls and/or power is achieved by switching off the engine control on the panel unless the manufacturer's instructions suggest this is unsafe.

The guidance has been produced jointly by the HSE and IPAF. Further information on the safe use of MEWPs can be found at [Mobile elevating work platforms \(MEWPs\) - HSE](#)

About Clwyd Associates...

We are a management consultancy, focusing on health and safety, and SAP based in the Midlands.

In business since 2000, we employ consultants with at least 15 years practical experience backed up by recognized professional and academic qualifications - ensuring our clients receive first class service.

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