

Work equipment



This guidance highlights some of the hazards associated with the use of work equipment and the steps that can be taken to reduce or mitigate the risk. Generally, any equipment which is used by employees (and volunteers where relevant) at work is considered to be work equipment.

The term 'work equipment' is very broad and includes any machinery, appliance, apparatus, tool or installation for use at work (whether exclusively or not). Examples include hammers, knives, ladders, drills, photocopiers, lifting equipment, access equipment like ladders and motor vehicles. It also includes equipment which employees or volunteers provide for their own use at work. Depending on the type of work equipment, accidents can result in several ways. For example, from contact with moving parts, electrical failures or operator error.

Legal requirements

Generally, if someone is injured you may need to show that you have met your duty of care.

In addition to this, you may have to comply with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. These place duties on people who own, operate or have control over work equipment. It also places duties on those whose employees use work equipment, regardless of who owns the equipment. In controlling this equipment, you will only need to comply with the requirements of the Regulations to the extent of your control. The use of work equipment extends to include the repair, maintenance, servicing, cleaning and transporting of it.

Risk advice line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

Under these regulations, equipment must be:

- suitable for its intended use
- safe for use, being properly maintained and inspected (if appropriate) to check it is correctly installed and does not deteriorate over time
- used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training in its use
- provided with any necessary safeguards and controls (e.g. guards, emergency stop devices, clearly visible markings, warning devices etc).

Other regulations may also apply where work equipment is used in certain circumstances. Examples include the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations, the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations etc.

Hazards to look out for

Typical hazards include:

- using equipment incorrectly e.g. using a chair to stand on
- broken or damaged equipment
- moving parts of machinery which are not properly guarded
- parts of equipment that can become hot or cold enough to cause burns or scalds
- parts of equipment that are inherently dangerous e.g. sharp, rough
- electrical faults on powered equipment e.g. damaged leads
- making adjustments whilst equipment is still in use or not switched off
- inadequate information or training for those operating or using equipment
- equipment left where anyone can access it
- unauthorised alterations to equipment (e.g. ladders should not be painted as this can hide defects)
- inadequate lighting.*

*This list is not exhaustive.

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- using equipment properly and where there are no adverse weather conditions
- providing adequate lighting so that equipment can be used safely
- making sure all safeguards are provided, fitted, used and maintained
- carrying out any necessary pre-use checks
- effective procedures for removing from use faulty or damaged equipment promptly
- ensuring that those who use the equipment are provided with any necessary information and training. In some circumstances and for some types of equipment, a formal qualification may be required (e.g. chainsaw)
- removing keys from equipment when not in use
- storing equipment securely to prevent unauthorised use
- inspecting equipment for wear or damage before use and periodically thereafter
- keeping equipment well-maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- providing personal protective equipment.*

*This list is not exhaustive.

Action

1. **Identify what work equipment you have in your workplace and what it is used for.**

Make a note of this.

Guidance

Most premises will have some work equipment. Commonly, this will include equipment for cleaning (e.g. vacuum cleaners, floor polishers), premises maintenance (e.g. hammers, handsaws, drills) and possibly grounds maintenance (e.g. lawn mowers, strimmers). Some equipment will be needed for specific tasks (e.g. ladders, scaffolding or access towers for working at height), whilst others will be used in the buildings themselves (e.g. lifting equipment).

Remember to identify anything your staff and volunteers bring in to use in the course of their work activities.

If you are an employer, you will need to complete formal risk assessments. These should help you identify if the correct equipment is being used for the jobs in hand.

2. **Check the precautions you have taken are adequate**

If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed and who will be responsible for implementing them.

Make a note of your findings and who is responsible for any actions.

The precautions necessary will depend on the types of work equipment you have and the way it is used. Typical precautions are set out above. However, this list is not exhaustive and others may be needed for your own particular circumstances.

Again, if you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, these should help you identify if adequate precautions are in place. Here, the risk assessments may be of a general nature or more specific relating to certain types of equipment, tasks or activities.

Whatever the case (and where appropriate), check that the equipment is:

- CE/UKCA marked and suitable for the task
- complete, with all necessary safeguards fitted (e.g. guards)
- free from defects
- properly installed and is stable (usually fixed down) if necessary
- provided with control switches that are clearly marked to show what they do
- provided with emergency stop controls where necessary
- used in work areas which are kept clean and tidy, free from obstructions or slips and trips hazards, and well lit
- issued with any required personal protective equipment (e.g. goggles, hearing protection)

A 'CE/UKCA' mark is a symbol that indicates that equipment complies with essential health and safety standards. Further information is available at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/introduction.htm>.

Making a start

Action

- 3. Ensure that the precautions you have identified are taken and remain effective, including any maintenance and servicing that may be required.**

Make sure any pre-use checks are carried out where necessary.

Make a note of any checks or inspections you make.

Guidance

Additional hazards can occur when equipment becomes unreliable and develops faults. Proper checks will allow these faults to be found early whilst periodic maintenance will make sure it remains safe for use. Some equipment may require simple pre-use and daily checks or other periodic inspection as well.

Simple hand tools usually require minimal maintenance, but could need repair or replacement over time. More complex, powered equipment will normally be accompanied by a manufacturer's maintenance manual, which specifies routine and special maintenance procedures to be carried out at particular intervals.

Maintenance and servicing should only be carried out by people who are competent to do the work.

In many cases, you may need to keep records of any maintenance, examination, inspection and test you make.

- 4. Ensure that employees and volunteers know how to use work equipment safely.**

Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.

The level of information and training required will vary depending on the type of equipment and the nature of the work involved. Again, if you have completed formal risk assessments these will help you determine what is necessary.

Making sure employees and volunteers receive simple instruction on how to use the equipment safely may be sufficient where activities involving the use of equipment are low risk. In many cases, an understanding of the user instructions affixed to or provided with the equipment would be enough. This may cover:

- any pre-use checks required
- the correct use of the machine including any limitations
- the use of any safeguards provided
- the use of any protective clothing and equipment required for that machine (e.g. safety glasses, hearing protection etc.).

In other instances, more specialist training may be required. Special consideration might be required for new starters, young people or those with disabilities.

All persons required to inspect, repair and maintain equipment should be provided with appropriate training and information.

Children and unauthorised, unqualified or untrained people should not be allowed to use machinery.

Making a start

Action

5. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for using work equipment.

Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.

Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above..

Guidance

If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record your arrangements as part of it.

In the event of a claim, evidence of what you have done may be important. This could include risk assessments; records of maintenance, inspections and other checks; records of information and training provided; your policy, your accident book etc.

Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available at www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/

Further guidance and resources are also available at www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/index.htm

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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