



EMPLOYER'S GUIDE

LOLER Regulations Explained

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Practical guidance for safer workplaces.

LOLER Regulations Explained: What Employers Need to Know About Lifting Equipment

If your business uses forklifts, cranes, lifting accessories or other lifting equipment, you may have responsibilities under the **Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998**, commonly known as **LOLER**.

LOLER places duties on people and businesses that **own, operate or have control over lifting equipment**. It applies across industries where lifting equipment is used at work and builds upon the wider requirements of PUWER.

For employers, one of the most important things to understand is that **operator checks, routine maintenance and a LOLER thorough examination are not the same thing**.

Each has a different purpose.

What Does LOLER Mean?

LOLER stands for:

Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998

The Regulations address risks associated with lifting equipment and lifting operations at work.

They include requirements concerning matters such as the suitability of lifting equipment, planning and supervision of lifting operations, positioning and installation, marking of equipment, and thorough examination and inspection.

In practical terms, LOLER is about making sure that lifting equipment and lifting operations are managed so that people are not put at unnecessary risk.

Who Does LOLER Apply To?

LOLER can place duties on **employers and self-employed people who provide lifting equipment for use at work, as well as people who have control over the use of lifting equipment**.

That means LOLER isn't relevant only to specialist lifting companies.

It can affect ordinary workplaces such as:

- Warehouses
- Manufacturing businesses
- Engineering companies

- Fabrication businesses
- Distribution centres
- Construction operations
- Workshops
- Logistics businesses
- Other workplaces using lifting equipment

If your business uses lifting equipment, LOLER is something management should understand.

What Equipment Does LOLER Cover?

HSE describes lifting equipment as **work equipment used for lifting or lowering loads**, including attachments used to anchor, fix or support it. LOLER also covers lifting accessories used to attach loads to lifting machinery.

Depending on the equipment and its use, examples can include:

- Forklift trucks
- Overhead cranes
- Hoists
- Vehicle lifts
- MEWPs
- Lifting accessories
- Slings
- Chains
- Shackles
- Other equipment used for lifting or lowering loads

There are important distinctions between different types of equipment, so employers shouldn't simply assume that every piece of workplace equipment is subject to exactly the same LOLER requirements.

Does LOLER Apply to Forklift Trucks?

Yes, relevant requirements of LOLER can apply to forklift trucks used for lifting loads.

HSE's guidance for rider-operated lift trucks specifically includes guidance on the **maintenance and thorough examination of lift trucks**.

For employers operating forklifts, this means equipment safety isn't only about training the driver.

The condition, maintenance, inspection and statutory examination of the equipment itself also matter.

What Is a LOLER Thorough Examination?

A **thorough examination** is not simply a quick visual inspection.

HSE describes it as a detailed and specialised examination carried out by a **competent person**, intended to identify defects or weaknesses that are, or could become, dangerous.

The competent person needs sufficient practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the lifting equipment to identify defects or weaknesses and assess their significance for continued safe use.

This is an important legal safety control.

How Often Does Lifting Equipment Need a Thorough Examination?

This is an area where employers should avoid applying one simple interval to every piece of equipment.

Where periodic thorough examination is required, HSE guidance identifies relevant intervals including:

- **At least every 6 months** for lifting equipment used to lift people
- **At least every 6 months** for lifting accessories
- **At least every 12 months** for other lifting equipment

Alternatively, examinations may be carried out in accordance with a **written examination scheme** drawn up by a competent person.

Thorough examination may also be necessary following exceptional circumstances that could affect the safety of the equipment.

For a typical forklift used to lift goods rather than people, the commonly applicable statutory interval is therefore **12 months**, unless a competent person's examination scheme specifies otherwise.

However, employers should establish the correct requirements for their particular equipment and circumstances rather than simply relying on a calendar reminder.

Who Can Carry Out a LOLER Thorough Examination?

LOLER requires thorough examination to be undertaken by a **competent person**.

Competence in this context means more than being familiar with the equipment.

The person should have enough practical and theoretical knowledge and experience to identify defects or weaknesses and assess how significant they are for the safe continued use of the equipment.

They should also be able to carry out the examination with appropriate impartiality and independence.

This is why businesses commonly use specialist inspection organisations or suitably competent engineers for LOLER thorough examinations.

Is a LOLER Thorough Examination the Same as Servicing?

No.

This is one of the most important distinctions for employers.

A **service or maintenance programme** is intended to keep equipment operating correctly and deal with wear, adjustment, lubrication and replacement of components.

A **thorough examination** is a systematic examination intended to identify defects that are, or could become, dangerous.

HSE makes clear that routine maintenance and thorough examination perform different functions.

Having a forklift serviced does not automatically mean that the employer's LOLER thorough-examination responsibilities have been satisfied.

Is a Pre-Use Inspection a LOLER Examination?

No.

An operator's pre-use inspection and a LOLER thorough examination are also different.

A pre-use inspection is an important operational safety check intended to identify obvious problems before equipment is used.

A LOLER thorough examination is a more detailed examination carried out by a competent person.

HSE specifically states that the requirement for thorough examination **does not replace operators' checks of lifting equipment and accessories before use.**

A well-managed workplace may therefore have several layers of equipment control:

Pre-use checks → defect reporting → maintenance → inspection → LOLER thorough examination

They complement one another rather than replace one another.

What Happens if a LOLER Examination Finds a Defect?

The competent person carrying out the thorough examination must produce a written report and notify the employer of defects which, in their opinion, are or could become a danger to people.

Where a defect presents an existing or imminent risk of serious personal injury, additional reporting requirements apply, including sending a copy of the report to the relevant enforcing authority.

Employers therefore need a clear process for receiving examination reports and acting upon defects.

A report shouldn't simply be filed away.

Why Is LOLER Important?

LOLER is important because failure of lifting equipment can have extremely serious consequences.

Loads may fall.

Equipment may become unstable.

Components or lifting accessories may fail.

Employees, contractors or members of the public may be struck, trapped or otherwise seriously injured.

Thorough examination helps identify potentially dangerous deterioration or defects before they result in an incident.

It is also a **legal responsibility**, not merely an optional maintenance recommendation.

HSE enforcement records demonstrate that employers can receive Improvement Notices where forklift trucks have not undergone the required thorough examination by a competent person. For example, an HSE notice issued in 2025 concerned a forklift that had not been thoroughly examined within the relevant period.

What Is the Difference Between PUWER and LOLER?

PUWER and LOLER are closely connected, but they are not interchangeable.

PUWER — Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

Deals more broadly with work equipment, including matters such as suitability, maintenance, inspection, information, instruction and training.

LOLER — Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998

Deals specifically with lifting equipment and lifting operations.

HSE describes LOLER as building on the requirements of PUWER.

For a forklift truck, an employer may therefore have responsibilities under **both PUWER and LOLER**.

A simple way of thinking about it is:

PUWER helps govern safe work equipment.

LOLER adds specific requirements relating to lifting equipment and lifting operations.

Neither should be considered in isolation.

Does a Current LOLER Examination Mean a Forklift Is Safe to Use Today?

Not necessarily.

A current thorough-examination report does not remove the need for day-to-day equipment management.

Something could happen to a forklift after its examination.

Damage could occur.

A tyre could deteriorate.

A hydraulic leak could develop.

A fork could become damaged.

A safety device could stop functioning correctly.

That's why operators still need appropriate pre-use checks and employers need effective defect-reporting and maintenance arrangements.

A current LOLER examination is not a substitute for checking the condition of equipment before use.

What Should Employers Keep Records Of?

Depending on the equipment and circumstances, employers should maintain appropriate records relating to:

- Thorough examinations
- Inspection reports
- Identified defects
- Remedial work

- Maintenance
- Equipment identification
- Examination dates
- Next examination due
- Relevant lifting accessories
- Defect reporting and corrective action

LOLER contains requirements relating to reports and records of thorough examination, so these shouldn't be treated merely as optional administrative paperwork.

A Practical Employer Checklist

If your workplace uses forklifts or other lifting equipment, ask:

Is the equipment suitable for the work?

Is it maintained properly?

Are operators carrying out appropriate pre-use checks?

Are defects reported and dealt with?

Is the equipment subject to the appropriate thorough examination?

Is the examination being carried out by a competent person?

Are examination reports retained and acted upon?

Are lifting operations properly planned and supervised?

Are operators appropriately trained and competent?

If any of those answers are unclear, that's something worth investigating before an incident forces the issue.

LOLER Is Part of a Bigger Safety System

LOLER should not become a once-a-year paperwork exercise.

Safe workplace transport depends on several things working together:

Suitable equipment

↓

Thorough examination and maintenance

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Pre-use inspection



Competent and authorised operators



Safe systems of work



Effective supervision



Ongoing monitoring

That is much stronger than relying on one certificate, one inspection or one piece of paperwork.

Need Help With Workplace Transport Training?

GH Training provides **AITT Accredited workplace transport and forklift training** for businesses across the North West.

We help employers develop competent operators through practical novice, experienced, refresher and conversion training across a range of workplace transport equipment.

GH Training does **not** carry out statutory LOLER thorough examinations, but we help employers understand how operator training, pre-use inspection, defect reporting and workplace supervision fit into the wider safe management of workplace transport.

For advice about workplace transport training:

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