

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

All tools and plant used on construction sites are defined as work equipment by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), and have the potential to cause harm.

This also covers situations where employers allow their employees to provide their own work equipment (for example, where tradesman use their own trowels, hammers or power tools).

The regulations are concerned with suitability for purpose of work equipment, safeguarding of dangerous parts of machinery, provision of appropriate controls, training of operators, and maintenance of all work equipment.

PUWER applies to employers in respect of work equipment provided for, or used by, their employees, self-employed people and other persons (such as visitors).



Essential points to consider

- The term 'work equipment' is wide ranging, and refers to any item of equipment, machinery or tools being used to carry out work.
- The word used means any activity involving the work equipment, including starting, stopping, repairing, modifying, maintaining, servicing and cleaning.
- Examples of work equipment include excavators, cranes, hammers, angle grinders and portable fixing tools.
- All items of work equipment must comply with certain legal requirements.
- The effort necessary to comply with the requirements will depend upon the complexity of the equipment and its potential to cause harm (for example, a trowel will not require the same level of inspection as a passenger goods hoist).
- The law also requires anyone who uses an item of work equipment to be trained, authorised and competent to do so.
- The effort and time needed to achieve the required level of competence will depend upon the complexity of the equipment and its potential to cause harm.
- Work equipment must be maintained and inspected as necessary to ensure that it can continue to be used safely.
- Certain types of work equipment must also be subjected to thorough examination, which is generally much more detailed than a routine inspection and can involve dismantling and testing parts of the equipment.
- Employers must make available to their workforce all relevant health and safety information, and – where appropriate – written instructions on the use of work equipment.
- Workers should have easy access to such information and instructions, and be able to understand them.

Reducing the risk of harm caused by work equipment requires the following steps to be taken

- Assessment of the hazards and risks involved in using work equipment.
- Implementation of measures to eliminate or reduce those risks.
- Ensuring that operators of work equipment are trained, competent and medically fit.
- Ensuring that work equipment is properly maintained and inspected regularly.

Further information

- *Safe use of work equipment: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 Approved Code of Practice and guidance* (free online Health and Safety Executive publication)

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