



# Safety in Tool and Equipment Hire

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There are many hazards in the business of hiring out tools and equipment including the use of dangerous equipment such as chainsaws, grinders, etc. Cleaning and maintenance of equipment also presents certain hazards as does the storage and handling of the equipment. The following details highlight some of the hazards and risks that might exist in your workplace. They are by no means exhaustive and will vary depending on your own particular business. As a starting point use the blank sheet provided in this pack and carry out your own simple risk assessment.

## Main Types of Hazards

### Use of Equipment

Tools and equipment available for hire, such as welders, drills, chain saws, sanders etc. can be hazardous if used incorrectly.

## Managing the Risk

- Ask what the tool or equipment is needed for.
- Ensure that the safe use of all equipment is demonstrated to the persons hiring the equipment - train staff to enable them to do this.
- Provide written instructions (including safety information) to be handed out with the equipment.
- Ensure the appropriate personal protective equipment e.g. goggles, ear defenders, masks, etc. is provided with the equipment.
- Fit all electrical equipment to be used outdoors with plugs which have 30mA Residual Current Devices (RCD).

### Inspection/Maintenance

Hire equipment will suffer a considerable amount of wear and tear, e.g. damage to plugs, insulation, guards, blades, etc. which can result in the equipment becoming dangerous to use.

- All equipment should be inspected for damage prior to hire and on return - written check lists can be used and kept for record purposes.
- Damaged equipment should be taken out of service immediately.
- Arrangements should be put in place for the regular maintenance and servicing of equipment. Again accurate records should be kept.

### Manual Handling

Lifting and moving heavy, bulky items such as pressure washers, kango hammers or generators can cause back injuries or muscular strain.

- Avoid lifting items which are too heavy or bulky - use a trolley or castors where possible.
- Train staff in proper lifting techniques.

### Storage Racking

Incorrectly stacked goods may fall injuring staff below, or overloading shelves/racks may lead to collapse. Persons climbing on racking may fall and injure themselves.

- Racking should be capable of supporting intended loads and be properly fixed e.g. bolted to the floor.
- Find out the maximum safe working load of all racking systems and mark it on the racking. Protect the racking from mechanical damage from fork lift trucks etc.
- Goods should be properly stacked with the heaviest at the bottom if possible.
- Proper safety ladders should be used and training on their use provided. No one should be permitted to climb on racking.



### Slips, trips and falls

Uneven, slippery or obstructed floor surfaces and trailing cables may lead to accidents and injury.

- Keep passageways, delivery areas and stairs clear.
- Clean up spillages immediately and display warning of wet surfaces.
- Fasten cables securely to the floor or re-route overhead if possible.

### Fire Risks

Obstructed exit routes, for example by stock and or accumulations of packaging can prevent escape and provide fuel for fires.

- Clearly mark escape routes e.g. using painted lines and signs.
- Keep all escape routes and fire exits clear, and make regular checks to ensure that this is the case
- Clear rubbish regularly.

### Hazardous Substances

Fuel and some chemicals used for cleaning and maintaining hire equipment can be harmful. Exposure to them through use or through accidental spillages or leaks can cause respiratory problems, dermatitis or chemical burns.

- Store all hazardous chemicals in their original containers.
- Obtain information on all substances stored and used in the premises from manufacturer's hazard data sheets.
- Devise a procedure for handling damaged containers and for cleaning up spillages and leaked substances.
- Provide staff with training, gloves etc. to enable cleaning chemicals to be used safely.

### Mechanical Handling

The use of equipment such as fork lift trucks and cranes can be particularly hazardous causing crushing and amputation injuries.

- Adopt safe systems of work e.g. procedures for training employees for traffic and pedestrian movement and for controlling the maintenance of trucks, cranes etc.
- Keys should be kept in a secure place when the equipment is not in use and should only be issued to authorised operators.
- All equipment should be marked with the safe working load (SWL) and the SWL should never be exceeded.

### Vehicle Movement

The collection and return of equipment can involve the use of a wide range of vehicles including cars, trailers, delivery lorries and fork lift trucks and can account for a large proportion of accidents in such premises.

- Devise a safe system of traffic movement to include methods and procedures for arrival, reception, unloading, loading and movement within the premises.
- Display clear information/warning signs setting out these procedures.
- Issue information/instruction cards to visiting drivers and members of the public.
- Devise one way traffic systems.
- Provide sufficient designated parking areas to allow the segregation of private cars from goods traffic.
- Restrict access to dangerous areas such as loading/unloading bays.

### Loading/Unloading

Accidents can occur if the vision of the driver is obstructed, or the equipment shifts or falls from the vehicle, or if the vehicle is unsuitable to carry the equipment.

- No vehicle should be loaded beyond its rated capacity or beyond the legal limit of gross weight.
- If a trailer is being used, always check the floor to ensure that it is safe to load.
- Equipment should be properly secured or arranged so that it is safe for both transportation and unloading.

#### ■ For Further Information:

*Health & Safety in Retail and Wholesale Warehouses*  
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