



SAFETY BULLETIN



Safety Alert Number: **0000030**

Issued **October 26th, 2023**, Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

Patient and Resident Lifting Equipment

Legal information

Section 8 and 26 of the Occupational Safety General Regulations

Section 13 and 28(e) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Summary

- Healthcare workers have the highest time-loss injury rates in Nova Scotia. Almost 80% of healthcare injuries are sprains and strains and approximately half of these injuries occur during client transfers or client repositioning. The injuries are not exclusive to patient/resident lift equipment issues. They extend across all methods of patient/resident transfer and repositioning. ([WCB Annual Report 2021](#))
- The use of patient/resident lifts can reduce injuries to healthcare workers and other workers by doing the lifting work. However, many lift operators and patients are injured when lifting equipment fails. Nurses, Continuing Care Assistants, and other caregivers need to know how to safely use lifting systems and these systems must be properly installed and maintained.
- Hazards include functional or structural failure of equipment, dropped loads and electric shocks. If the equipment fails, an attendant will try to catch the falling client, or they must help them down from a lift that is stuck in an elevated position. This creates a risk of injury to the lift operator and the client.
- As part of the required hazard assessment, equipment that is appropriate to the environmental conditions and lifting needs should be selected. Ongoing client assessments should be performed to determine any changes in the status of the client such as agitation level or weight gain.



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Training, Inspections and Maintenance

- Adequate training on 'prior-to-use inspections' for this equipment and its accessories, such as motors, tracks, and slings, are extremely important. Equipment and accessories must be compatible.
- The safe working load (SWL) must be clearly marked on the lift, the sling and all accessories used to connect the sling to the lift and to connect the lift to a ceiling track, if applicable. The component with the lowest SWL defines the maximum permissible load that can be lifted with the assembled system. The SWL for the combined system must be confirmed prior to use and compared to the weight of the client.
- Additional training on the safe operation of patient lifts is also required to reduce and prevent injuries. The training must include the "equipment specific safety requirements" detailed in the manufacturers' specifications/manuals.
- Slings are an integral part of the lifting system. Sling maintenance and selection must be performed according to the manufacturer's specifications. Injuries have occurred due to inappropriate laundering, lack of inspections, improper size selection and use of incompatible slings.
- Periodic inspections of the assembled system must be performed by a competent person at the frequency specified by the manufacturer to maintain the integrity of the installation over time. An employer is free to specify more frequent inspections.
- Records made by the employer for inspection, maintenance or repair work must be kept for two years.
- Any equipment that fails inspection must be removed from service physically or by a lock-out/tag-out method. The system cannot be used until the faulty equipment is replaced or adequately repaired by a competent person.

Contact for bulletin queries.

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