BRITISH STANDARD

BS 7121-12:1999

Safe use of cranes —

Part 12: Recovery vehicles and equipment — Code of practice

ICS 43.160; 53.020.20

Committees responsible for this British Standard

The preparation of this British Standard was entrusted by Technical Committee MHE/3, Cranes and derricks, to Subcommittee MHE/3/14, Vehicle recovery cranes and equipment, upon which the following bodies were represented:

Associated British Ports
Association of Lorry Loaders Manufacturers and Importers
Construction Confederation
Construction Plant — Hire Association
Electricity Association
Federation of Manufacturers of Construction Equipment and Cranes
Federation of Wire Rope Manufacturers of Great Britain
Health and Safety Executive
Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
Institution of Plant Engineers
Institution of Structural Engineers
Lifting Equipment Engineers Association
Lloyds Register of Shipping
Safety Assessment Federation Ltd

The following bodies were also represented in the drafting of the standard, through sub-committees and panels:

Association of Vehicle Recovery Operators (AVRO)
Automobile Association
Central Motorway Police Group
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions — Central Transport Group
Institute of Vehicle Recovery
Metropolitan Police
Ministry of Defence
Recovery Equipment Manufacturers and Suppliers Association (REMSA)
Road Haulage Association Ltd
Road Rescue Recovery Association
Royal Automobile Club

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Contents

Foreword

This Code of Practice has been prepared under the direction of the Engineering Sector Board. It should be used in conjunction with BS 7901,[1)] which deals with recovery vehicles and equipment.

This Code of Practice is recommended to owners and users of recovery vehicles and equipment who are encouraged to observe all the provisions, and where possible, upgrade existing equipment and operating procedures accordingly.

Whilst it is recognized that the recommendations given do not relate to design and manufacturing aspects of recovery vehicles and equipment, it is strongly advised that this code of practice is referred to by designers in consideration of such factors.

It has been assumed in the drafting of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions is entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people.

As a Code of Practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

A British Standard does not purport to include all necessary provisions of a contract. Users of British Standards are responsible for their correct application.

Annexes A to D are informative.

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 9 and a back cover.

[1)] Under preparation.

1 Introduction

This British Standard Code of Practice is issued for the benefit of all employers and technicians within the vehicle recovery industry. It sets out clear guidelines and recommendations for ensuring both the health and safety of those working in the recovery industry and of members of the public who may be affected by their activities during recovery operations.

The efficient recovery of any vehicles involved in accidents or breakdowns on the highway is a vital service. It demands a considerable amount of expertise and substantial investment by the recovery industry in trained technicians and suitable equipment.

The costs to everyone concerned in an inefficient recovery operation can be high in respect of personal safety and damage to property. Long delays also cause more congestion and seriously hamper traffic movement. Poor performance often occurs as a result of using inappropriate equipment, or through a lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding by the technicians involved, or inadequate communication.

The vehicle recovery industry has recognized that the responsibility for efficient and safe roadside operations rests with the technicians at the scene of the accident or breakdown. It is therefore essential that all technicians receive adequate information, instruction and training before they operate as technicians.

The ultimate responsibility for devising safe systems of work, providing adequate training, selecting competent technicians and supplying appropriate supervision rests with the employers, to whom this code of practice is primarily directed. It can also be used by recovery customers as a benchmark by which they can assess the performance of their service provider.

The text reflects the importance of good management for health and safety by stressing the need to plan effectively and establish clear policies and procedures at the outset. It goes on to deal with the requirement for capable, well-trained technicians and the need for the employer to supply sufficient information and appropriate protective equipment to enable them to operate safely.

After considering the safety of the recovery vehicle and the equipment that is provided to technicians, it then looks at safe systems of work relating directly to the operations involved in the recovery of vehicles. Annexes provide further information to complement the main text.

General recommendations on the safe use of cranes are given in BS 7121-1 and general recommendations on the safe use of lorry loaders are given in BS 7121-4.

2 Scope

This British Standard Code of Practice gives recommendations for the care and safe use of recovery vehicles and equipment, to ensure the safety of technicians and other persons in the vicinity of recovery operations.

3 Normative references

The following normative documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of this British Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. For undated references, the latest edition of the publication referred to applies.

BS 5426:1993, *Specification for workwear and career wear.*

BS 7121-1:1989, *Code of practice for safe use of cranes — Part 1: General.*

BS 7121-4:1997, *Code of practice for safe use of cranes — Part 4: Lorry loaders.*

BS 7901, *Specification for recovery vehicles and vehicle recovery equipment (including recovery cranes).*[2)]

BS EN 166:1996, *Personal eye protection. Specifications.*

BS EN 471:1994, *Specification for high-visibility warning clothing.*

BS EN 345, *Safety footwear for professional use.*

BS EN 388:1994, *Protective gloves against mechanical risks.*

BS EN 397:1995, *Specification for industrial safety helmets.*

4 Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Practice, the following terms and definitions apply.

4.1

accident

when a vehicle has been damaged by collision, or has left the road undamaged but cannot return without assistance

NOTE An accident is not the same as a breakdown.

4.2

breakdown

when a vehicle is immobilized through mechanical failure, which has not been caused by an accident

4.3

casualty vehicle

vehicle which is to be repaired or recovered

[2)] Currently in preparation — planned publication date Autumn 1999.

4.4

competent person

person who has appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the type of equipment to be inspected and who is capable of detecting defects or weaknesses and assessing their importance in relation to the safety and continued use of the equipment

4.5

flat towing

towing whereby the casualty vehicle supports all of its own weight on the road and is towed by means of a tow bar or towing frame

4.6

ground anchor

existing solid object, such as a tree, or device driven into the ground, or dug into the ground, to act as an anchor point

4.7

hauling

act of using a winch to drag a load horizontally, or up a sloping surface as opposed to lifting it

4.8

inspection scheme

method of assessment to determine if equipment can be operated, adjusted and maintained safely ranging from, for example, a visual daily check by a technician to a functional test, with or without load by an independent third party

4.9

lift-and-tow

towing whereby either the front end or the rear end of the casualty is raised off the ground by the towing vehicle, the mass of the casualty being supported partly by its own axles which are still on the ground, and partly by the rear end of the recovery vehicle

4.10

recovery

any operation which deals with the removal of a broken-down, abandoned or accident damaged vehicle, which cannot be repaired in situ and driven away unaided

4.11

recovery equipment

primary recovery device fitted to the recovery vehicle or other items of equipment, and accessories to the main recovery device

NOTE The term "loose recovery equipment" is used to distinguish between the main recovery device and other equipment and accessories.

4.12

recovery industry

all supplies engages in providing vehicle rescue and recovery services

4.13

recovery vehicle

vehicle complete with its normal inventory of recovery equipment used primarily in the recovery of motor vehicles, which may also carry equipment for repairs at the roadside

4.14

righting

action of returning a vehicle to an upright attitude

4.15

safe working load (SWL)

maximum load which a machine is allowed to carry taking into account the maximum working load, the minimum breaking load of the material from which it is made and the nature of the work that it will be required to do

4.16

steersman

person at the controls of a casualty vehicle while it is being towed

4.17

suspended towing

towing where either the front or the rear of the casualty vehicle is lifted from above, as with a crane and "A" frame and sling

4.18

technician

person who has received training in the recovery of motor vehicles and who can demonstrate the competence to work alone and unsupervised

4.19

transporter

any vehicle designed for transporting

4.20

transporting

when the casualty vehicle is carried entirely on the bed of a transporter or a trailer

NOTE It should not be confused with "towing".

5 Management of the recovery operation

5.1 Organizing for safety

Health and safety is a shared responsibility of everyone involved in the recovery industry. Employers and technicians have specific duties under the legal framework and safety rules have to be conscientiously applied. Everyone needs to demonstrate a commitment to safety in all that they do and say.

5.2 Commitment

5.2.1 *Setting an example*

The attitude of an employer affects the attitude of their technicians. The aim should be to approach all activities in a safe manner so that eventually safety becomes a natural part of everyday work.

5.2.2 *Hazards and risks*

Unsafe actions or practices should not be tolerated. A rigorous approach should be adopted to identify hazards and risks in the workplace and to take appropriate action to control or eliminate them.

5.3 Legislation relating to the safe use of recovery vehicles and equipment

All employers and technicians have a duty to make themselves aware of all current legislation relative to their industry. A list of the most important health and safety regulations relevant to the safe use of recovery vehicles and equipment is given in annex A.

6 Selection and training of technicians

All technicians should receive relevant training, which is task-related, practical and realistic.

Technicians should be able to demonstrate their competence and working knowledge before they are allowed to undertake work activities alone and unsupervised.

Technicians should understand their duties and responsibilities relating to the recovery of motor vehicles. They should attend regular refresher and updating courses to ensure they are aware of current legislation, new techniques and advances in equipment.

Instruction and training should include the following items:

a) the carrying out of daily checks on their vehicle and equipment;

b) the legal aspects of recovery work;

c) the capabilities and limitations of the various recovery vehicles and the towing and lifting equipment they carry, particularly in relation to weight restrictions;

d) safe parking and working procedures at the roadside;

e) the formation of a recovery plan;

f) the legal requirements when dealing with vehicles carrying hazardous materials;[3)]

g) co-operation with police and other emergency services;

h) safe and efficient winching techniques;

i) safe and efficient loading and towing techniques; safe and efficient driving techniques when towing or transporting a casualty vehicle;

j) the completion of necessary documentation;

k) customer care.

Further details of the minimum content of recovery training courses, for the recovery industry, can be found in annex B.

7 Personal protective equipment

Technicians should be supplied with at least the following personal protective equipment (PPE):

a) reflective safety garment conforming to BS EN 471;[4)]

b) safety footwear conforming to BS EN 345;

c) safety gloves conforming to BS EN 388;

d) industrial hard hat conforming to BS EN 397;

e) personal eye protection conforming to BS EN 166;

f) workwear conforming to BS 5426.

8 Fire extinguishers

Employers should ensure that a minimum of a 2 kg dry powder fire extinguisher or equivalent is fitted in the cab of each recovery vehicle.

9 First aid provisions

Employers should ensure that an approved first aid kit is fitted on each recovery vehicle.

[3)] If technicians are present at an incident where hazardous or unknown substances have been spilled from a vehicle they should seek professional advice without delay.

[4)] A reflective safety garment should be worn at all times when working outside of the recovery vehicle. At no time should any other clothing, or any other item, be worn over the reflective safety garment including wet weather clothing.

10 Maintenance of the recovery vehicle and equipment

All vehicles and their equipment should be kept in efficient working order. Defects should be reported promptly.

All recovery vehicles should be serviced regularly according to the manufacturer's recommendations and instructions.

The recovery vehicle and its related equipment should meet all current legal requirements and be fit for its purpose. A list of typical items considered to be recovery equipment can be found in annex C.

All recovery vehicles should be kept clean inside and out and carry high visibility markings of not less than 125 mm in width on the sides and rear of the vehicle.

Recovery vehicles fitted with rear doors or tailgates should have conspicuous markings fitted on the inner doors and tailgate.

Seat and lap restraints should be maintained in good working order.

11 Inspection, testing and roadworthiness of recovery vehicles

11.1 Testing and roadworthiness

There is a legal requirement for the following vehicles to be tested annually:

Vehicles up to 3 000 kg	GVM	Class 4 MOT
Vehicles between 3 000 – 3 500 kg	GVM	Class 7 MOT

Above 3 500 kg gross vehicle mass (GVM), lift and tow vehicles are exempt from plating and testing. All transporter vehicles require plating and testing without exception. Whilst exempt from the legal requirement for annual testing, it is recommended that owners and operators of vehicles above 3 500 kg GVM are aware of the Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness (see clause **3**).

In addition to the annual roadworthiness test, all vehicles and equipment should be examined by a competent person (see **4.1**) at regular intervals and be inspected regularly for defects. (See annex D.)

Copies of test certificates should be available in the vehicle at all times.

11.2 Inspection

Lifting equipment and lifting accessories should be inspected in accordance with an inspection scheme (see **4.2**) drawn up by a competent person/organization taking into account the manufacturer's recommendations.

Inspection records should be available at all times.

12 Safe working practices

12.1 General

Only those technicians who have been suitably trained for the task should be allowed to operate recovery vehicles and equipment. It is essential that technicians understand the theory behind the safe use of recovery equipment and for them to have received adequate training and instruction in its use.

The longer the time spent at the breakdown scene, the greater the danger. Consequently, all roadside recovery work should be carried out as quickly as possible but with a professional attitude and always taking into account the prevailing traffic and weather conditions.

Technicians should be familiar with the permissable loading imposed, as specified on the manufacturer's plate. For example, they should be aware of the danger of overloading on the rear axle(s) and the need to retain sufficient weight on the front axle to maintain braking efficiency and steering safety.

Soft towing is not recommended and should only be used to extricate a vehicle from a difficult situation where no other method is practicable. Use of straps, ropes and chains should be limited to short pulls only and not used to tow a vehicle on a motorway or any other class of road.

12.2 Use of warning lights

Use of warning lights should be restricted to the immediate approach to a breakdown scene, working at the scene, and leaving again. Having left the scene and safely rejoined the main carriageway, warning lights should be switched off, unless the recovery vehicle is likely to be a hazard to other road users.

12.3 Parking at the scene

The technician should always assess the situation at the outset and ensure the safety of all persons at the breakdown scene.

Roof lighting and hazard warning lights should be turned on once the casualty vehicle has been identified and the recovery vehicle leaves the main carriageway. The casualty vehicle should always be approached from the rear unless local conditions make that impossible.

The recovery vehicle should be parked two to three vehicle lengths to the rear of the casualty vehicle unless the situation dictates that an immediate removal is necessary. If two to three vehicle lengths are not practical, then a suitable distance should be chosen commensurate with the location of the casualty vehicle. The recovery vehicle should be parked parallel to the offside running lane, as close as possible to the nearside, with front wheels turned fully to the left.

12.4 The recovery plan

Technicians should establish a recovery plan at the outset and if possible in consultation with a police officer at the scene. Liaison with all the emergency services is important to preserve access and exit at the scene of an accident.

The amount of working area needed in order to manoeuvre vehicles should be considered. It is quite possible that traffic flow may need to be interrupted or altered, sometimes on the opposite carriageway, to allow the recovery to be carried out safely and swiftly. The police should be informed as soon as possible about the intentions of the technician and the dialogue should continue during the course of the recovery operation so that everyone is aware of changing events.

12.5 Placing of warning devices

When parking behind the casualty vehicle, the technician should exit from the recovery vehicle from the nearside whenever possible. Cones and a divert arrow, as appropriate, should be placed three vehicle lengths to the rear of the recovery vehicle.

All movement between vehicles should be confined to the nearside whenever possible.

12.6 Working at the scene

12.6.1 *General*

If it is quicker to repair the vehicle than to recover it, then it should be repaired. Conversely, if it is quicker to recover the vehicle then it should be recovered.

12.6.2 *Dealing with persons at the scene*

The technician should advise all persons present about the actions they should take to ensure their own safety.

The technician should guide customers to a place of safety off the highway whilst the situation is assessed. If the faults of the casualty vehicle cannot be rectified quickly and safely it should be immediately recovered to a place of safety.

All persons present should be kept informed about the recovery procedures that are going to be undertaken.

12.6.3 *Removal of the casualty vehicle*

The recovery vehicle should be safely manoeuvred into a position to facilitate recovery.

Customers should be moved to the safety of the recovery vehicle cab away from the recovery equipment. Once they are inside, they should be advised to stay there and to keep children and any pets under their control within the vehicle. The technician should then proceed to connect up for recovery.

The technician should continue to work on the nearside as much as possible and minimize any time that has to be spent between the two vehicles.

Casualty vehicles with defective power steering or brakes should not be towed by means of a rigid bar.

The police should be informed if a safe manoeuvre cannot be performed to complete the recovery without their help. Before leaving the scene all equipment, tools and any debris should be removed and then the cones and divert arrow should be collected.

Before moving away from the breakdown scene the technician should be aware of other road users and their safety. If the recovery procedure is likely to obstruct traffic flow, or the traffic is too heavy to rejoin the running lane safely, the technician should seek police assistance.

12.6.4 *Signalling systems*

When using cranes and certain other recovery equipment, the signalling system in accordance with BS 7121-1:1989 and BS 7121-4:1997 should be used.

A sample of winchman's signals can be seen in Figure 1.

12.6.5 *Additional working practices on a motorway*

In addition to the recommendations given in **12.6.1** to **12.6.4**, the following precautions should be taken:

a) the recovery vehicle should be parked on the hard shoulder as far away from the nearside running lane as is possible;

b) the police should be immediately informed if the casualty vehicle has come to rest in an unsafe position;

c) technicians should never attempt to cross motorway running lanes or the central reservation on foot, or in their vehicles unless the motorway has been closed and they are authorized to do so by the police;

d) at no time, except under police instruction, should technicians reverse on motorway slip roads or hard shoulders to gain access to casualty vehicles;

e) when the casualty vehicle is ready for removal, speed should be gradually built up on the hard shoulder and then having identified a suitable space in the nearside lane, the technician should signal, and move off the hard shoulder. Extreme care should be taken in relation to other vehicles that may be stationary ahead on the hard shoulder and any motorway junctions that may be imminent.

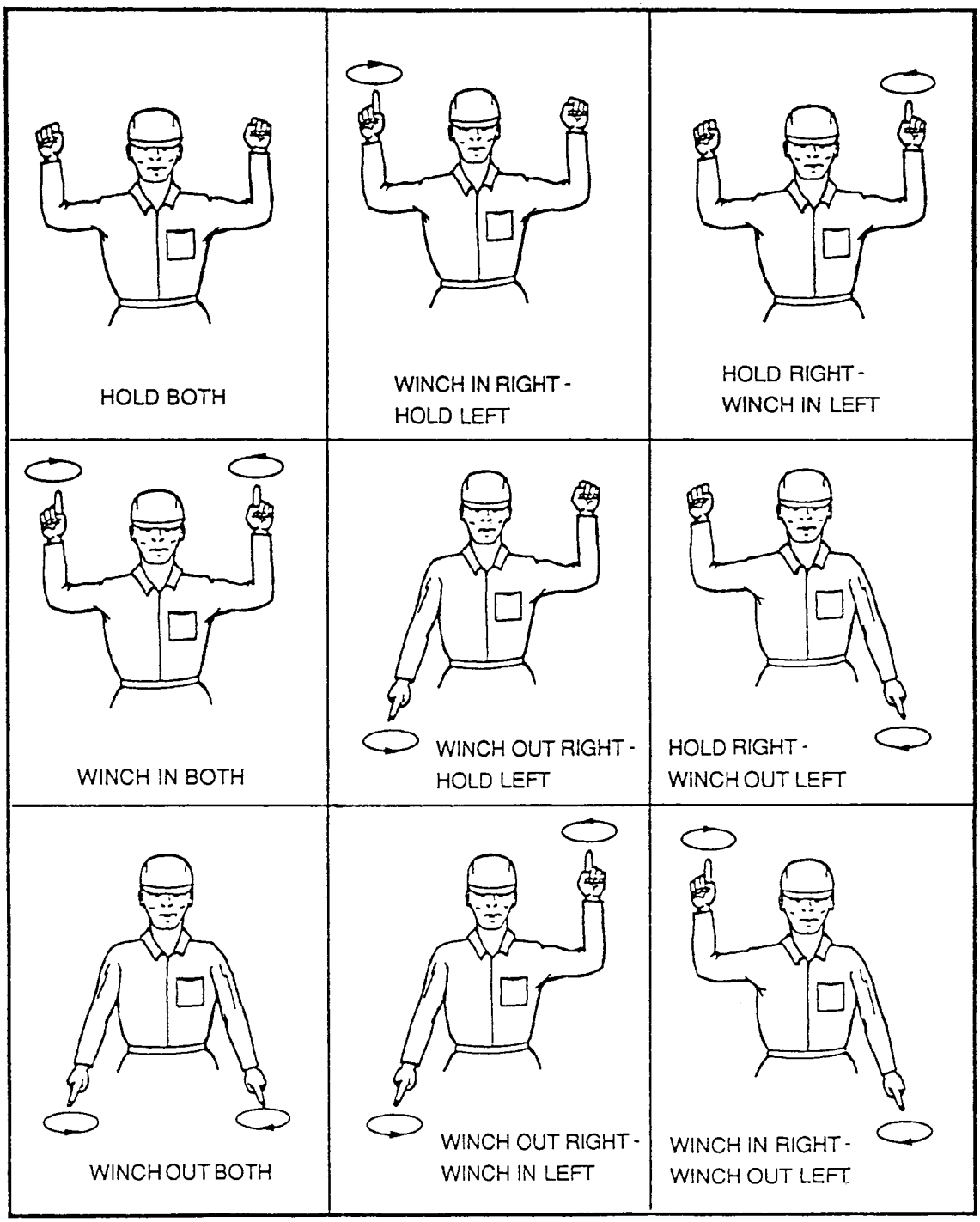

Figure 1 — Winchman's hand signals

12.7 Accident damaged vehicles

12.7.1 *Hazardous articles*

When removing accident damaged vehicles, the technician should take extreme care in relation to any soiled medical items left by the emergency services at the scene, e.g. used bandages, hypodermic needles, etc., and with regard to any body fluids in and around the vehicle.

Extreme caution should be exercised when dealing with stolen, vandalized or abandoned vehicles that may contain dangerous articles that have been placed there maliciously, e.g. infected hypodermic needles, razor blades, etc.

Any unidentified substances discovered in or around a vehicle should not be touched and the police should be called immediately.

12.7.2 *Air bags*

A vehicle that is fitted with airbags will always carry identification. The technician should avoid being put in a position where injury could be caused by the airbag deploying itself unexpectedly.

12.7.3 *Fires*

If there has been a fire, safety gloves should be used while working on the vehicle because some materials become dangerous after being subjected to heat.

12.7.4 *Overturned vehicles*

The condition of the load being carried should always be considered, for instance to check to see if it has shifted or if it is still safe and secured.

Doors or hatches should not be opened to examine the load as the rigidity of the vehicle may be altered. Also, if the load is no longer secure it may cause injury to the technician and other persons in the vicinity.

The technician should look for indication of a refrigerated load and for any Hazchem (hazardous chemicals) signs or ADR (European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road) panels.[5)] If the driver is available he should have details or there may be related paperwork in the cab.

[5)] If technicians are present at an incident where hazardous or unknown substances have been spilled from a vehicle they should seek professional advice without delay.

Annex A (informative)
Legislation relating to the recovery industry:

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH). London: The Stationery Office.

Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. London: The Stationery Office.

Motor Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations [Schedule 8] 1986. London: The Stationery Office.

Noise at Work Regulations 1989. London: The Stationery Office.

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (PPE). London: The Stationery Office.

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER). London: The Stationery Office.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). London: The Stationery Office.

Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 and amendment 1994. London: The Stationery Office.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. London: The Stationery Office.

The Highway Code. London: The Stationery Office.

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. London: The Stationery Office.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992. London: The Stationery Office.

Annex B (informative)
Sample recovery training programme

The recovery training should include as a minimum:[6)]

B.1 Safety at the roadside

— recovery personnel;

— driver and passengers of casualty vehicle;

— third parties including other road users and their vehicles.

B.2 Damage-free recovery

— the recovery vehicle and its equipment;

— the casualty vehicle and its contents;

— public and private property.

B.3 Use and maintenance of recovery vehicles and their equipment

— thorough knowledge of the workings and limitations of the recovery vehicle;

— SWLs of all items of recovery equipment being used;

— positioning and stabilizing a recovery vehicle for recovery.

B.4 Characteristics and use of vehicle-mounted winches

— winch design and pulling characteristics;

— SWL of a winch together with its rope;

— maintaining a winch;

— care and inspection of winch ropes including end fittings.

B.5 Winching techniques

— use and care of snatch blocks;

— mechanical advantage using simple tackle (light recovery);

— mechanical advantage using simple and compound tackle (heavy recovery);

— use of SWLs and care of recovery chains, strops, slings and shackles.

B.6 Recovery techniques

— righting an overturned vehicle, including theory of moments and centres of gravity;

— hauling a casualty vehicle back to a firm surface, including assessing resistances;

— handling a jack-knifed articulated vehicle (heavy recovery).

B.7 Additional equipment

— air cushions;

— wheel dollies;

— wheel skates;

— fire extinguishers.

B.8 Flat towing, suspended towing and transporting

— assessing the suitability and preparing a casualty for flat towing: transmission, steersman, brakes;

— assessing the suitability and preparing a casualty for suspend towing: transmission, steering, brakes;

— stability, front and rear axle loading and gross vehicle weights;

— security, safety and care of vehicle contents, including hazardous or live cargoes;

— primary restraints on casualties being towed, suspend towed or transported; use of safety chains and secondary restraints.

B.9 Safety precautions

Safety precautions should be emphasized whenever appropriate in a training course consolidated in printed form for easy reference. This will also provide an opportunity for safety precautions of a more general nature to be given where there might not be a natural place for them elsewhere.

[6)] Training on equipment outside the scope of the technician's normal activities is not essential.

Annex C (informative)

Typical items considered to be recovery equipment

These are as follows:

— air cushions;

— auxiliary lighting;

— axle stands;

— chains, shackles;

— dolly wheels;

— ground anchors;

— motorcycle frames;

— snatch blocks;

— stabilizer jacks/stifflegs (if not part of other equipment);

— timber blocks.

— towing ambulances;

— wheel chocks (for fixing and security);

— wheel skates;

Additional safety equipment to be carried in all recovery vehicles:

— divert arrow;

— fire extinguisher;

— first aid kit;

— identical traffic cones;

— suitable portable working light.

Annex D (informative)

Recovery vehicle safety checks and reporting

D.1 Recovery vehicle safety checks

These should include at least the following:[7)]

a) daily checks of items that affect roadworthiness: drivers to monitor and report promptly any defects or symptoms of defects that could adversely affect the safe operation of their vehicle;

b) regular safety inspections that include those items covered by Department of Transport annual test (MOT): these safety inspections should be based on time and/or mileage so that frequency is based upon usage.

Defective vehicles and equipment should be taken out of use until satisfactory repairs have been effected.

D.2 Safety inspection reports

These should include:

a) vehicle details;

b) list of all items inspected;

c) date of inspection and name of person doing it;

d) written record of the results;

e) full details of any rectification work.

Records of safety inspections should be kept for at least 15 months.

[7)] Anyone carrying out safety inspections should be competent to assess any defects.

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