

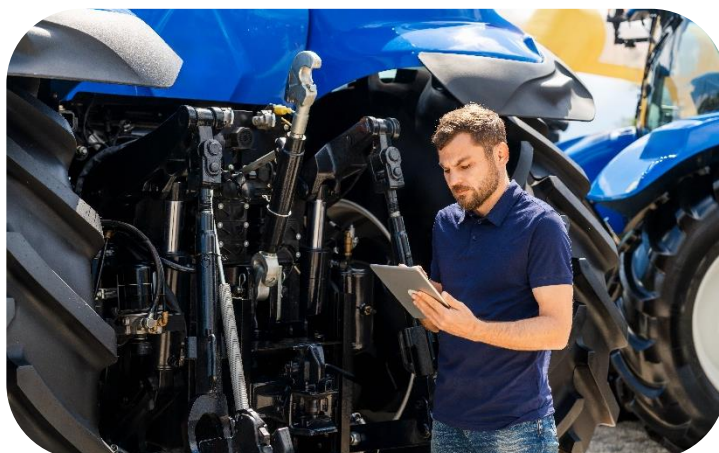
Essential Inspections – Agriculture

A guide to managing essential inspection requirements and reducing risks across agricultural operations.

Essential Inspections - Agriculture

Introduction

Protecting workers, family members, and others is essential, as agriculture remains one of the most hazardous industries in the UK. On many farms, serious injuries and fatalities occur as a result of damaged or poorly maintained machinery, as well as defective installations such as faulty wiring or electrical systems. In the UK agriculture accounts for just 1% of the workforce however the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) statistics indicate that the sector generates approximately 20% of all workplace fatalities. The fatal injury rate is 22 times higher than the all-industry average.



In the busy day-to-day running of a farm, it can be easy for certain safety checks and maintenance tasks to be overlooked. However, these areas are critical to keeping everyone safe. Many safety checks and maintenance tasks are also legal requirements, with failure to comply potentially resulting in enforcement action, prosecution, and significant fines.

This document highlights the key areas that farmers and contractors should pay particular attention to, helping to reduce risks, stay compliant with legal obligations, and ensure a safe working environment for everyone on the farm.

Lifting Equipment

Lifting equipment encompasses a wide range of machinery, equipment and accessories used in agricultural operations. This includes telehandlers, forklift trucks, and front-loader tractors, as well as attachments such as person cages. Lifting accessories extends to items like chains and bottle jacks, which are often overlooked.

It is important that this equipment is maintained in good working order for the safety of workers using it and those within the operational area. However, there is also a statutory requirement under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations, more commonly known as 'LOLER'.

LOLER requires that all lifting equipment and operations are properly planned, carried out safely, and that equipment and associated accessories are subject to regular, thorough examinations at specified intervals to ensure continued safe use.

The specified intervals are:

- Every 6 months for lifting accessories.
- Every 6 months for equipment lifting people.
- Every 12 months for all other lifting equipment.

Inspections must be carried out by a Competent Person. Records of examination must be retained and defects acted upon immediately.

If the Competent Person identifies a serious defect in any item of lifting equipment or lifting accessory that is, or could become, a danger to people, they are legally required to send a copy of the report to the HSE or local enforcing authority.

Maintaining an asset register is a practical and effective way to manage the safety and compliance of machinery and equipment. By ensuring that all relevant equipment and associated accessories are clearly listed, along with key information such as inspection and servicing dates, this provides a simple method to track and manage ongoing maintenance requirements. An asset register also helps to reduce the risk of missed inspections or overdue servicing, which could lead to unsafe conditions.

It is also prudent to align maintenance and servicing activities, so they are carried out prior to any scheduled thorough examinations, ensuring that equipment is in the best possible condition before formal inspection.

Work Equipment

A wide range of machinery and equipment is used for farming activities, including tractors, harvesters, foragers sprayers, conveyors, and other work equipment, all of which may present significant safety risks due to their size, power, and speed. It is therefore essential that such equipment is safe, suitable for its intended use, and properly maintained to protect operators and others in the vicinity.

There is a requirement to ensure:

Suitability of Equipment

- Equipment must be suitable for its intended use and anticipated working conditions.
- It should only be used for the purpose it was designed for, in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Maintenance

- Equipment must be maintained in a safe condition.
- Regular servicing and prompt repairs are required.

Inspection

- After installation and before first use.
- After assembly at a new site or location.
- At regular intervals or when exceptional circumstances occur.
- Where equipment has not been used for a period of time e.g. pre-harvest inspections which should be more detailed.
- Records of inspections should be kept where appropriate.

Competence and Training

- Users must have adequate training, information, and instruction. Training equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, practical experience, and confidence needed to use the equipment safely.
- Supervisors and those maintaining equipment must also be competent.
- Ongoing monitoring to ensure it is being used in a safe manner, for the intended purpose and within accordance with manufacturer's recommendation.

Safety Measures / Controls

- Dangerous parts must be guarded or protected e.g. guards, barriers.
- Controls must be clearly visible, identifiable and easy to operate.
- Emergency stop controls should be provided where appropriate.

Markings and Warnings

- Equipment must have appropriate signs, markings, and warnings for safe use.

Isolation and Energy Sources

- Equipment must have means to safely isolate it from all energy sources e.g. electrical, hydraulic.

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify significant hazards and ensure the equipment is suitable for its intended use, correctly installed, and fitted with appropriate safety features such as guards, emergency stops, and warning systems.

To further safeguard workers, practical measures should include routine pre-use checks to identify visible issues and a structured maintenance regime, with accurate records kept up to date to demonstrate ongoing compliance and safe operation.

Fixed Wiring

Agricultural environments often expose electrical installations to harsh conditions such as moisture, dust, vibration, and corrosive substances, all of which can accelerate deterioration and increase the likelihood of faults. For this reason, fixed wiring inspections are essential to ensure systems remain safe, compliant, and suitable for the demanding conditions found on farms.

Regular inspections at recommended intervals help identify wear, damage, or non-compliance before they develop into serious hazards, including electrical fires, equipment failure, or electric shock risks to workers and livestock.

The primary method of assessing the condition of fixed wiring is through an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR), commonly referred to as fixed wire testing. While not explicitly mandated at set intervals by law, there is a requirement to ensure that electrical systems are maintained in a safe condition, making periodic EICRs widely recognised as the accepted way to demonstrate compliance.

Recommendations to maintain fixed electrical installations are:

Inspections: Typically, every 3 years, unless risk assessment indicates a shorter interval.

High-Risk Areas: Specialised areas (e.g., intensive livestock buildings or areas with high moisture) may require more frequent inspections, potentially every 1-3 years.

Routine Checks: A visual inspection should be performed annually to check for wear, signs of overheating, or damage.

Qualified Professionals: The inspection must be carried out by a Competent Person e.g. a qualified electrician familiar with BS 7671 (IET Wiring Regulations).

Particular high-risk areas include poultry sheds, where dust accumulation can increase fire risk, and dairy parlours, which are inherently wet environments and therefore present a greater risk of electric shock.

Pressure Systems

Pressure systems are used widely within agriculture and examples include compressors, pressure washers with integral pressure vessels, autoclaves, steam cleaners and boilers.

Maintaining pressure systems is important as systems such as compressed air units, milking installations, sprayers, and hydraulic machinery operate under significant pressure, and any failure, such as a rupture, leak, or explosion, can result in serious injury or even fatality to workers, as well as harm to livestock.

This is required for:

- **Compressed Air Systems:** When the Pressure (bar) × volume (litres) > 250
- **Steam Systems:** Steam sterilisers, autoclaves, and coffee machines with steam boilers.
- **Other Systems:** Gas-loaded hydraulic accumulators, portable cleaning units, and pressurised gases at (≥ 0.5) bar

The key elements of a WSE are:

- **Competent Person:** It must be drawn up by, or certified by, a Competent Person with necessary expertise.
- **Scope:** Details specific components (vessels, protective devices, pipework) that require examination.
- **Frequency:** Defines the maximum interval between examinations, which must be strictly followed.
- **Safety Limits:** Identifies the maximum operating limits of the system.

Typically, a WSE will occur at least every 12 months, though a "Competent Person" will define specific intervals based on risk, which may be from every 12 to 24 months.

Portable Appliance Testing

Typically, there are many types of portable electrical appliances on farms which include heaters, drills, pressure washers, portable lighting and clippers. These items through use and working environments are exposed to wear, potentially resulting in damage which is not always obvious.

Combined with regular visual inspections, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is a good way to check the integrity of appliances in use, especially those which are used in higher-risk environments for example those which are damp or dusty.

To maintain appliances in working order and spot any damage, it is good practice to conduct:

User Checks – These can be carried out by workers and should be carried out before electrical equipment is used, with the equipment disconnected. Checks should focus on damage to leads, plugs or outer cover of the equipment itself, or signs of overheating.

Visual Inspections – These should be carried out by someone with basic electrical knowledge. The focus should be on suitability of equipment, looking into reported issues and additional checks on plugs, correct fuse etc.

PAT – This does not need to be carried out by an electrician, however, it must be a Competent Person who has the right equipment for the task and knows how to interpret the results.

Once a piece of equipment has been subject to PAT it remains important to continue with user checks and visual inspections as PAT will only give an indication of the safety of an appliance at the time of the test and does not imply that the item will be safe for a further period of time.

Maintaining a register of equipment along with PAT test certificates is a practical means to evidence that equipment is subject to a programme of checks.

Summary

Creating a safe working environment is essential, not only to protect workers and others but also to maintain equipment and buildings in good condition. Acting on the measures outlined within this document helps to identify faults, wear, or defects in lifting equipment, electrical systems, and machinery at an early stage, before they escalate potentially resulting in serious incidents such as injury, equipment failure, or fire. A proactive approach to inspection and maintenance supports safer working practices, reduces the likelihood of unexpected breakdowns, and ensures that assets remain reliable and fit for purpose.

Checklist

A generic Essential Inspections for Agricultural Safety Checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

Specialist Partner Solutions

Aviva Risk Management Solutions can offer access to a wide range of risk management products and services at preferential rates via our network of Specialist Partners.

- [General Electrical Inspections and Thermographic Imaging: Bureau Veritas](#)
- [Thermographic Imaging: PASS](#)

For more information please visit: [Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners](#)

Sources and Useful Links

- [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)**](#)
- [British Standard BS 7671 \(IET Wiring Regulations\)](#)
- [The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations \(LOLER\) 1998: Approved Code of Practice and guidance**](#)
- [The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\): Approved Code of Practice and guidance**](#)
- [The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 \(EAWR\): Guidance on Regulations**](#)

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Additional Information

Relevant Loss Prevention Standards include:

- [Electrical Installations Inspection and Testing](#)
- [Thermographic Surveys](#)
- [Work at Height – Harvest Time](#)

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at riskadvice@aviva.com or call 0345 366 6666.*

*The cost of calls to 03 prefixed numbers are charged at national call rates (charges may vary dependent on your network provider) and are usually included in inclusive minute plans from landlines and mobiles. For our joint protection telephone calls may be recorded and/or monitored.

Appendix 1 – Essential Inspections - Agriculture Checklist

Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Essential Inspections - Agriculture	Y/N	Comments
1.	Lifting Equipment Has all lifting equipment been identified, listed and subject to thorough examination?		
2.	Lifting Equipment Have all lifting accessories been identified, listed and subject to thorough examination? Remember to include shackles, chains, webbing slings, eyebolts, and man cages etc.		
3.	Lifting Equipment Have all items identified been listed on an asset register and corresponding copies of inspections maintained?		
4.	Work Equipment Has all work equipment and machinery been subject to risk assessment to ensure that it is fit for purpose and it's intended use?		
5.	Work Equipment Has all work equipment and machinery been subject to risk assessment to ensure hazards have been identified and suitable controls are in place?		
6.	Work Equipment Have all workers received training and information on the correct use of work equipment? Ensure records are maintained.		
7.	Work Equipment Is there a programme of maintenance and inspection of work equipment? Ensure records are maintained.		

	Essential Inspections - Agriculture	Y/N	Comments
8.	Fixed Wiring Has a programme of fixed wiring inspections been implemented? Ensure records are maintained.		
9.	Fixed Wiring Have all observations and defects been acted upon?		
10.	Pressure Systems Have all items that require a written scheme of examination been identified? Have these been placed on an asset register?		
11.	Pressure Systems Have arrangements been made to ensure these are subject to a written scheme of examination? Are these inspected within recommended intervals by a Competent Person? Ensure certificates are maintained.		
12.	Portable Appliance Testing Is there a regime of portable appliance management implemented? Does this include both formal visual inspections and PAT testing? Ensure certificates are maintained.		
13.	Portable Appliance Testing Are workers instructed to visually check portable appliances prior to use? Are they aware of the action to take in the event of damage / defects identified?		

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