GUIDE

Crane Man Baskets: UK Rules for Lifting People with a Crane

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A crane man basket, also called a crane slung safety cage or personnel basket, lets a crane lift people to work at height or bring them down in an emergency. It's allowed in the UK, but lifting people with a crane is treated as the exception, not the default, and the lift has to be planned, examined and run with more care than a normal load. Here's when you can use one, what the law asks for, and how to run the lift safely.

When Can You Lift People with a Crane?

HSE says that lifting people with equipment that isn't specifically designed for lifting people should only happen in exceptional circumstances, for example for rescue, and that extra safety precautions may be needed. Unless your crane's manufacturer says it's designed for lifting people, treat a man basket lift as one of those exceptional cases.

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 also say that work at height must be properly planned, supervised and carried out by competent people, and that you must assess the risks first. In practice, that means looking first at equipment built for the job, such as a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP) or scaffold, and using a crane basket when that equipment can't reach the work or can't be set up safely.

Rescue is the other common reason. A rescue cage gives you a planned way to bring people, including a casualty on a stretcher, down from a structure when there's no other safe route.

What LOLER Asks For

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) apply to every lift. For lifting people, HSE's guidance comes down to these points:

- **Plan the lift.** Lifting operations must be planned and organised so they're carried out safely, with people of sufficient competence involved at each step. HSE notes that where people are lifted, the factor of safety is often higher.
- **Supervise it.** Supervision should match the risk and the experience of the people doing the lift, and HSE says training and adequate supervision are very important when people are lifted.
- **Examine it every six months.** Where people are lifted, whether the equipment was designed to lift them or not, it must be thoroughly examined at six-monthly intervals or in line with an examination scheme. That covers the crane as well as the basket and its chains.
- **Check it before use.** HSE says other pre-use checks and inspections may also be needed.

- **Use equipment marked for people.** Manufacturers must show clearly, on the equipment and in the instructions, whether it's intended for lifting people.

The Standard for Crane Man Baskets

Suspended baskets for lifting people with a crane are covered by BS EN 14502-1. All our crane man baskets are built to BS EN 14502, CE marked and UKCA compliant. Each one hangs from lifting chains, and the safety cages and standard rescue cage have an overhead guard against falling objects, plus fork stirrups for moving the empty cage with a forklift.

Cage	People	Floor or overall size	Access
1 person crane slung safety cage	1, 120kg SWL	825 x 825mm floor	Self-closing sliding bar
2 person crane slung safety cage	2	1100 x 1500mm floor	Step-through bars or a self-locking side gate
Crane slung rescue cage	8 plus a stretcher	About 2700 x 1500mm overall	Full-height self-locking mesh gate
Deluxe crane slung rescue cage	8 plus a stretcher	1500 x 3500mm overall	Two self-locking side gates, fitted with a defibrillator, first aid kits, emergency lights and harnesses

Before the Lift

- **Check the crane's duty.** The crane has to be rated for the basket, the people and their tools together, at the radius you'll be working at. Ask your crane supplier or the person planning the lift what duty applies when lifting people.
- **Agree how you'll talk.** The people in the basket and the crane operator need a reliable way to talk throughout, usually by radio, and the operator should stay at the controls the whole time anyone is in the basket.
- **Plan the rescue.** Decide how you'll get people down if the crane breaks down or someone is taken ill, and don't rely on the people in the basket to rescue themselves.
- **Follow the basket's instructions on harnesses.** If the basket has anchor points, the instructions will say how and when to clip on.
- **Look up and around.** HSE warns that excavators, MEWPs and cranes working near overhead power lines are at particular risk, that electricity can flash over without contact, and that lines should be treated as live unless the owner proves otherwise. See HSE's guidance on overhead power lines.
- **Watch the weather.** Stop if the wind starts to swing the basket or visibility drops.
- **Do a trial lift.** Lift the empty basket through the planned route first, so you know it clears everything before anyone gets in.
- **Fork stirrups are for moving the empty cage only.** Never lift a cage with a forklift while anyone is inside it.

Crane Basket, Forklift Cage or Telehandler Basket?

A crane basket reaches over obstacles and into places a machine on the ground can't get close to. If the work is low and the ground is good, a platform on a forklift or telehandler may suit better, but those have their own rules. HSE guidance PM28 covers non-integrated work platforms on forklifts and telehandlers. See our guides to forklift safety cages and telehandler man basket rules.

Crane Man Basket FAQs

Is it legal to lift people with a crane in the UK?

Yes, with a basket built for lifting people, a lift planned by a competent person and equipment that's been thoroughly examined. HSE says lifting people with equipment not specifically designed for it should only happen in exceptional circumstances, so check first whether a MEWP or scaffold would do the job.

How often does a crane man basket need a thorough examination?

At least every six months, or in line with an examination scheme, plus checks before use. The same applies to the crane and the lifting chains when they're used to lift people.

What standard should a crane man basket meet?

BS EN 14502-1 covers suspended baskets for lifting people with cranes. Ours are built to it, CE marked and UKCA compliant, and supplied with a Certificate of Conformity.

How many people can go in a crane basket?

Only as many as the basket is marked for. Our cages carry one or two people for work at height, and our rescue cages carry up to eight people and a stretcher.

Can I move a crane man basket with a forklift?

Only when it's empty. The fork stirrups are for moving the cage around site, never for lifting anyone.