

PAC GUIDE



LOLER requires platforms to carry proof that they have been examined by a 'competent person'.

As an EC Notified Body, responsible for Type Approval inspection of platforms, the technical opinions of PAC carry real credibility. That is what underpins the value of its Competent Assessed Persons (CAP) Scheme.

Two years ago, PAC stood up for its opinion to be counted in providing an independent assessment of exactly who is a 'competent person', as required by LOLER and PUWER 98. Regarded as something of a grey area, many organisations operating mobile elevating work platforms declared themselves slightly wary of who would be deemed 'competent' to carry out thorough examinations and inspections of platforms.

Its CAP (Competent Assessed Persons) Scheme provides practical guidance on the duties and responsibilities of the 'competent person' and how best to ensure compliance with the legislation. By including an individual assessment at the end of the sessions, the value of the added benefit of independent documented evidence – in the form of the CAP card and a certificate –

PAC extends its help with LOLER compliance

has been welcomed by those companies that have already taken advantage of the Scheme.

Taking LOLER seriously

A common thread runs through the reasons for sending engineers on the CAP courses. Companies that have done so to date, stand together in taking the machine examination and inspection requirements of LOLER compliance particularly seriously.

They also tend to recognise the value of their employees and place considerable emphasis on the importance of continuing training in developing their skills further.

Meek Group's Austin Baker makes the point simply: "We have a well-defined programme of development for all our staff, which sets out the amount of training that each employee should receive.

We recognised the CAP course as a useful element within this plan for a number of our engineers."

Whilst Meek felt entirely confident that their engineers were 'competent' within the requirements of LOLER and PUWER 98, Austin Baker clearly values the independent documentary evidence from PAC, that those successfully passing the assessment received: "The concept of 'competence' might not be entirely straightforward to prove, if that should ever become necessary. Having our opinion backed by an authoritative, independent body would certainly be very useful in such a situation."

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He also recognises some commercial advantage, too: "We feel that it also serves as a reminder to our customers of how highly we value the level of experience and skill of our engineers."

This is a view echoed by Rapid Platforms who hire and sell equipment as well as providing service and training. Rapid's John Jordan endorses the value of an independent assessment. "Although the concept of a 'competent person' is a little woolly and should probably be more precisely defined, we were totally confident that our engineers were more than competent. However it still made sense to us to send them on the CAP assessment for that additional reassurance that we were right". As a small company, Rapid depends on the quality of its service, which in turn relies on experienced engineering staff.

Practical help

He added that sending Rapid's two most experienced engineers on the CAP course also proved useful in confirming that their approach to machine examination was indeed the right one. They also derived benefit from practical advice on the best way of setting out the necessary records and other documentation vital to back up the inspection and examination schedules.

Malcolm Bowers of Aerials for Industry

comes from a slightly different angle. In making the commercial decision to rely on in-house staff for the LOLER examinations and inspections, the company went to considerable lengths to ensure that this was undertaken properly. "We felt we really did want the reassurance of an independent assessment and we wanted one that really stands for something." In this context, by way of underlining the high standards demanded in the assessment, he openly admits that two of the engineers actually failed the assessment first time round.

Underlining the steps Aerials for Industry takes to ensure that in-house LOLER inspections and examinations will be recognised as effective, the 'independence' requirement of LOLER has been written in to current contracts of employment. Any employee responsible for machine inspection is empowered to condemn and take out of service any machine that is seen as unsatisfactory. This decision cannot be overruled on commercial or any other considerations, not even at board director level, without automatically giving the engineer the right to go over the company's head to the HSE. That is how seriously Aerials for Industry takes LOLER compliance.

Planning and Management

For future sessions, a new category – Planning and Management – has been added to the Scheme. The previous focus on the technical aspects of machine examination and inspection, central requirements

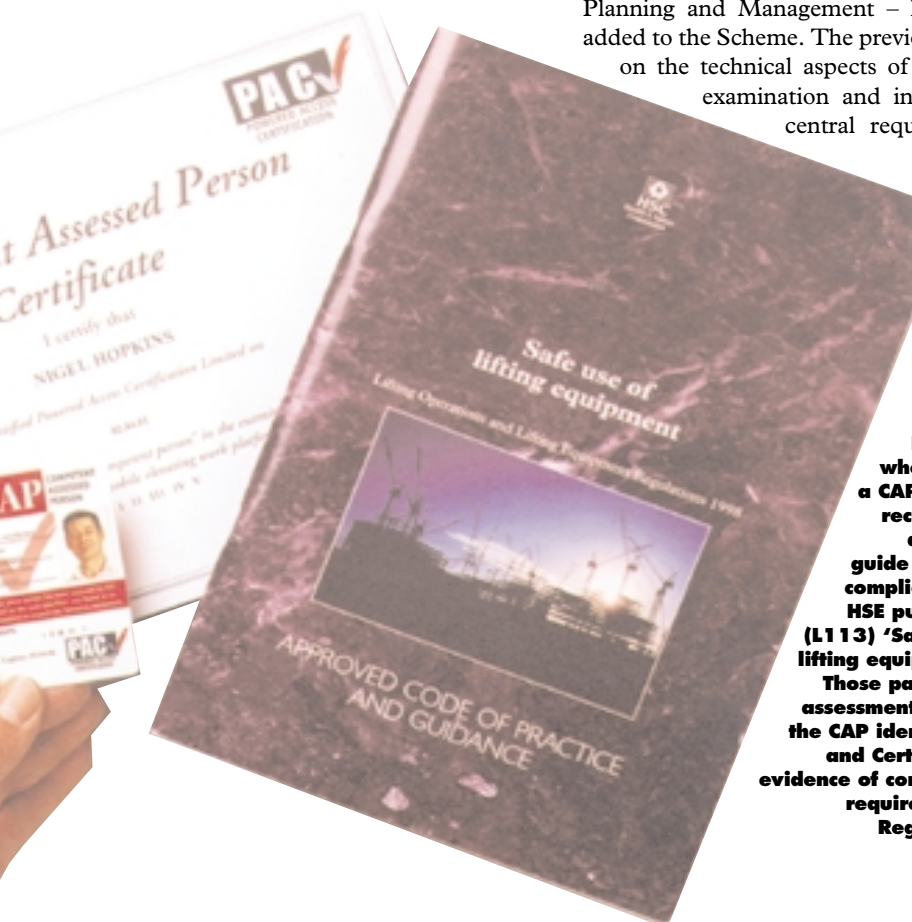
of LOLER, retain their importance. However, planning and managerial support for the examinations and inspections is frequently the responsibility of people other than those who actually perform them.

The inclusion of this important function within the Scheme allows staff undertaking these tasks to benefit from the detailed presentation of the duties imposed on them by LOLER and from the comprehensive practical guidance offered by the courses. The extension of the Scheme also means that they will now be able to carry the CAP card as documented evidence of competence within their sphere of responsibility.

As the assessment section, which follows the presentation, involves individual interviews carried out by PAC's Technical Officers, the extension of the Scheme has been achieved without major re-structuring of the popular format and content of the sessions.

A further refinement of the Scheme is the introduction of four broad categories of machine for which 'competence' to undertake examinations has been assessed – self-propelled up to 25m and above 25m platform height and vehicle-mounted platforms, again split into the same two height sub-divisions – which will be identified on the CAP card. This allows those whose experience covers only certain types of platform to be awarded a CAP card specific to their individual capabilities.

Regular CAP sessions are to be held in the Manchester area on the second Tuesday each month throughout 2001. In addition, group sessions for a minimum of six candidates can be arranged on an organisation's own premises or at a convenient local venue. Where six or more candidates from the same organisation attend for assessment, either at regular monthly sessions or as a separately arranged group, each qualifies for a £50.00 discount on the standard £225.00 (ex VAT) cost. ■



Everyone who attends a CAP session, receives the definitive guide to LOLER compliance, the HSE publication (L113) 'Safe use of lifting equipment'... Those passing the assessment also get the CAP identity card and Certificate as evidence of competence required by the Regulations.

Full details and application forms for PAC's Competent Assessed Persons Scheme are available from:
Powered Access Certification,
Tel: 015395 62444
Fax: 015395 64686
email: info@pac.uk.com;
website: www.pac.uk.com .

A free PAC Pack, which includes the comprehensive guide to the successful implementation of LOLER – All you need to know about 'competent persons' is available on request.