



# Understanding Hoist Maintenance & Inspections



By Don McEvoy

October 2019 saw the first prosecution of two directors of a South Brisbane automotive business under Queensland's new industrial manslaughter laws. It carries a maximum of 20 years in jail and up to a \$10,000,000.00 fine. Other States are considering following. The maximum penalty in other states under Worksafe or Safework laws is up to a \$3,000,000.00 fine and five years in jail.



Individuals (mechanics or employees) face up to 5 years in jail or \$300,000.00 fines). I don't normally like taking a negative view on anything but sometimes you just have to. You owe it to yourself, your family and those you work with to do the most you can to ensure the next investigation isn't you or the company you work for.

There is an Australian Standard written around hoist maintenance (AS/NZS2550.9:1996) available from the SAI global website. It is quite clear about management's responsibilities, frequency of inspections and what is to be checked.

I can honestly say I have yet to walk into a workshop and confirm they fully complied with the Australian Standards around hoist servicing. That's a big claim but its true. I've visited thousands of workshops right around the country. I have installed hundreds of hoists and serviced thousands and I have yet to see anyone fully comply. Every operator and owner of a hoist used for commercial purposes is no doubt aware of their obligations to have it inspected annually by a hoist service company. Many also understand their obligations

**In a worst-case scenario of someone getting hurt under a hoist in your workshop it would make sense for a court of law, a lawyer or an insurance company to use this Standard as a point of reference. It is therefore in your best interests to ensure you comply fully.**

around daily preoperational inspections, however very few fully understand their responsibilities as managers or of the necessity for "Routine inspections" performed monthly or at an interval not exceeding three months – that's three months, not yearly (manufacturer dependent).

Every one of these checks must be documented and systems put in place to ensure those checks have been completed. I'm not sure how well "it wasn't my job" will stand up in court if someone is seriously hurt or worse. It is not up to the hoist service company to inform you of your obligations it is up to you, as operators, business owners or managers. It is you that risks a fine or imprisonment for a worst-case scenario.

If your team are doing your daily checks and signing off, who is checking to see that the checks are being done daily? What are your triggered responses when a hoist fails a check? How is that documented and what systems do you have in place to ensure the repair is documented against the fault?

Who within your company is authorized to implement repairs and what level of repairs are you allowed to do? The answer to the last question is entirely subjective and as such will no doubt be tested in a court of law if the need arises. There is no qualification for hoist servicing, that's not a good thing as the Standard refers to a "competent person". I am quite sure lawyers would have a field day testing the definition of "competent" with zero understanding of a spanner spinning world.

Just because you can service a car doesn't mean you understand the 400 page Australian Standards document around wire rope inspection. This test in court will no doubt be at the expense



of the "competent person" or at their employer's expense. Therefore, I would highly recommend only experienced hoist service personnel repair your hoist. Also consider that if your hoist service company causes an issue which results in an injury or worse you may be called upon to justify why you chose that company so choose wisely and ask some questions about the general level of experience within their team.

I referred to Routine Inspections previously. It is the need for a hoist to be inspected for safety related items at no more than 3-month intervals. This time period is clearly stated at the top of the section regarding routine maintenance in the Australian Standard. Section 6.3.3 states that if you have a hydraulic hoist the wire ropes need to be inspected in accordance with AS2759-2004 (Steel wire rope use, operation and maintenance) to ensure they are fit for service.

Pneumatic components will need to be checked according to AS/NZS3788:2006 (Pressure equipment - in service inspection). Screw hoists need to have the clearance of their lift nuts checked. There are many other safety related checks to be performed according to the section on routine maintenance.

Remember, this is no longer than three monthly intervals. Many hoist manufacturers recommend this to be performed every month. What does the hoist manual suggest for your hoists?

Try fighting a lawyer claiming you should have followed the inspection recommendations set out in the hoist manufacturers manual if you also recommend your customers follow the manufacturers handbook when servicing vehicles.





If it states monthly inspections of all wearing components and wire ropes how will you justify not doing them? This is part of "managements responsibilities" which is clearly defined in section 5.2.

Have you read the operators manual or service manual around your hoist's maintenance? The twelve-monthly inspection performed by professionals is a safety inspection and lubrication service, but it is no substitute for routine maintenance inspections.

This is not new; the Australian Standard around hoist maintenance has been around since 1996 however legislation and red tape which potentially references these standards has increased significantly. Hoist service habits have been formed around the bare necessity; the bare minimum required to keep things moving. With today's litigious society it is in everyone's self interest to ensure you do as much as possible to ensure your hoists comply with AS/NZS2550.9:1996.

Remember it's not just business owners who are liable for prosecution it is potentially every manager in the line of responsibility and hoist operators too.



If you haven't read it or don't plan to, if you don't have time to read your hoist manuals or can't find them at least find a company willing to help you implement processes and procedures to help you comply.

"Hope for the best, Plan for the worst" Is a quote by Lee Childs. With respects to vehicle hoists I believe it is good advice.

Please, look into your responsibilities.

Don McEvoy is a qualified mechanic and business owner of Adept Automotive Equipment. A business dedicated to programmed maintenance for workshop equipment and providing systems-based solutions to conforming to Australian Standards around hoist maintenance. [www.adeptaauto.com.au](http://www.adeptaauto.com.au)

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