

Safety Action Notice

Reference: SAN2406

Issued: 25 October 2024

Review Date: 24 October 2025

Hoist spreader bar and looped sling attachments: sling loop may detach from spreader bar hook during lift

Summary

IRIC has received multiple reports of near misses involving looped sling attachments becoming detached from the spreader bar during lifts. After the slack in the sling straps has been removed at the start of the lift, stop, and check that the sling attachment loops are securely attached to the hook of the spreader bar, before proceeding.

Action

1. Direct this notice to all appropriate managers, staff and users.
2. Ensure all sling and hoist combinations are compatible and appropriate for the patient.
3. Ensure assessments are reviewed if the equipment combination, configuration or the patient's condition changes.
4. Always carry out the safety checks recommended in the manufacturer's instructions for use for hoists and slings.
5. Check the sling is not damaged or excessively worn prior to each use.
6. If there is a loop retaining mechanism on the spreader bar hook, check it is in place, intact and that it prevents the sling loop from detaching.
7. Be aware that the loop material can be stiff when new and may un-hook without being noticed.
8. As the lift begins and the load is taken up causing the sling body and loops to become taut:
 - pause the lift.
 - carry out a further visual and a physical check to ensure that all the loops are securely seated within the spreader bar hook.
 - If not, lower down the hoist and then adjust the sling loops accordingly.
9. If there is a problem with the spreader bar or sling loop attachments which means the lift cannot proceed safely and in accordance with the lifting plan:
 - stop the lift
 - return the patient to a position of safety.
10. Trainers should ensure sling loop checks form a clear part of hoist training.

Background Information

IRIC has received reports of near miss incidents involving hoists with spreader bars that have loop slings attachments. The problem occurs following placement of the loop in the spreader bar and before the lift commences.

The loop, which at this point is not under load, is able to move away from the position in which it was placed. This may cause it to detach un-noticed from the spreader bar or come to rest on top of the hook once under load.

Background Information (continued)

When one or more sling loops move out of position this way, the sling is unable to support and contain the occupant who may then slip out and fall. The problem is exacerbated if the loop material is particularly stiff, for example, when it is still relatively new. Worn-in loop attachments are less likely to be affected.

Images illustrating correct position of sling loop in the spreader bar



Figure 1

Correct position of the sling loop in the spreader bar attachment.



Figure 2

Correct position of the sling loop in the spreader bar attachment.

Suggested onward distribution (may not include all affected departments)

Specialties & Departments

Adult Care Services
Adult Day Services
Adult Residential Services
Adult Social Work Services
Care for the Elderly
Care Homes
Children's occupational therapy
Children's Residential Services
Children's Services
Community Care
Day Centres

Hospices
Moving and Handling
Nursing
Occupational Therapy
Physiotherapy
Rehabilitation
Wards

Corporate and Support

Health & Safety
Risk Management

Information about IRIC

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC), Facilities Division, NHSScotland Assure
NHS National Services Scotland, Tel: 0131 275 7575, email: nss.irc@nhs.scot

Accessibility: Please contact us using the above details if you are blind or have a sight impairment and would like to request this alert in a more suitable format.

IRIC remit: general information about adverse incidents, safety alerts and IRIC's role can be found in [CEL 43 \(2009\)](#), *Safety of Health, Social Care, Estates and Facilities Equipment: NHS Board and Local Authority Responsibilities*, issued 30 October 2009.

To find safety alerts:
scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)



To report an incident:
scan the QR code or [click this link to visit our website](#)



NHS National Services Scotland is the common name for the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/>