

EQUITY

Fit to Fly A Performers' Checklist

Fit to Fly is the outcome of a collaboration between Equity, the National Centre for Circus Arts, and a collection of rigging companies and freelance circus riggers. It aims to provide performers working in small "clip and go" venues, (cabaret venues and small theatres / festivals etc.) where there may be a pre-installed performer flying solutions, and little or no rigging support, with information to help them assess the safety of that set up.

This document outlines some of the minimum considerations a performer should take into account before undertaking an aerial performance at a venue.

What you need to do

Asking venues to provide information about the safety of their facilities is a two-way street, and there is also information that you as a performer should be able to supply to the venue in return.

You should always ask for and provide this information in advance of any contract / booking.

- You should know the load requirements for your act (in kilos) and be able to clearly provide your rigging requirements.
- You should have a risk assessment and method statement for your act. This needs to be adapted to the specific venue as risks will be different depending on the individual factors at the site.
- You should have reports of thorough examination for your aerial equipment, (sometimes referred to as 'lifting equipment') and records of inspection for any large items of equipment you use. The law requires thorough examination or inspection to be carried out by a competent person*.
- You should have a Technical Specification (Rider) document outlining what your requirements are in order to perform your act safely and to the artistic standard expected – and making it part of your contract. This should include safety factors for your act as well as practical considerations such as dressing room, toilet facilities, access to drinking water etc.

- You must have Public Liability Insurance and be sure it is suitable and covers your activities. In particular, if you are undertaking any rigging that may be used by others, you should ensure it covers this, AND THAT YOU ARE QUALIFIED OR EXPERIENCED ENOUGH TO DO THIS SAFELY AND COMPETENTLY

What to ask (and what do you need?)

There are things you need to confirm with the venue or producer **at the point of enquiry** or before you are committed to / contracted for the show. You should also double check these are in place when on site.

- Area** – The size and type of stage or performance area available. Is it suitable for your act?
- Height** – the height of the rigging points or, if lifting equipment pre-installed, the maximum performance height above the stage.
- Clear Air Space** – between the performance area and any lighting, sound and other installations and equipment (including in the roof / ceiling space such as air-con units / lights etc as well as microphones, speakers etc on the stage area).
- Details of any performer lifting equipment** such as winches/ motors on site and full details of who installed it. Equipment should be fit for purpose. i.e. designed specifically for aerial performance and installed by a competent person with experience of aerial performance rigging. AND INSPECTED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS – WITH EVIDENCE OF THIS.
- Loading capacity** – The load capacity of equipment installed at the venue when used to support people to ensure it is capable of sustaining safely the forces generated by your performance. This can be either the SWL (safe working load) or WLL (working load limit) measured in kilos.
- Certification of work** for equipment and lifting equipment installed at the venue. There should be paperwork to prove a **competent person*** has done this. **AND INSPECTED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS – WITH EVIDENCE OF THIS**
Evidence is sometimes paperwork that the venue can supply to you and/or a tag or marker on the rigging point itself that states the date of the last inspection and the name of the company who inspected it, along with the loading in kg.

g) **Access to Rigging Points** – if you are expected to attach your equipment at height, what equipment is available to do this safely and when will the venue make it available to you? Remember you might have to arrive very early to set up and stay very late in order to de-rig. You can't bring ladders in to take your kit down if the guests are still eating!

- Are ladders in good condition and fit for purpose? Are you competent to use them? Should there be two people for this?
- Are catwalks and gantries safe to access with handrails etc. to prevent falling?
- If a scissor lift / cherry picker / similar is to be used, are you licensed to do so and if not, will the venue / booker provide a licensed operator?

h) **Assistance** – ensure that someone competent will be available on site to assist with rigging before the performance as well as afterwards for de-rig if required and / or in the case of emergency during the performance. If you are working or performing at height, you need a realistic rescue plan.

i) **First Aid** – what provisions do you have for yourself and what exists at the venue?

j) **Time** – for rigging, rehearsal, tech and warm-up before the performance and afterwards for derigging. Make sure enough time is allocated in your schedule and confirmed in your contract before you commit to performing.

k) **Performer Flying Automation – motors and winches**

Lifting equipment used for aerial performance must be appropriate and be installed by a competent person. The safety features could include:

- Limit of travel devices to prevent lifting or lowering beyond identified positions.
- An emergency stop that disconnects the incoming power to the motor winch.
- Overload protection, slack wire detection and double brakes.
- Winch drums should be of a type that prevents the lifting rope being damaged
- An appropriate factor of safety throughout the load path.

- Installed and **operated by a trained, competent person.**

Hoists that do not meet these basic requirements should never be used for any type of performer flying/aerial activity.

Wire or fibre rope (eg. polyethylene) winches are usually preferred over chain hoists for dynamic acts.

The rope should be terminated appropriately and according to the manufacturer's instructions.

The performer should be connected to the lifting rope with appropriate connectors (eg. karabiner or maillon).

Lifting equipment must be operated by a competent person.

There must be a rescue plan in the event of lifting equipment failing.

If in doubt about performing safely – DO NOT PERFORM!
Do not be pressured by anyone to use faulty or questionable equipment. Always ask questions.
Your safety is always the top priority!

NOTES:

- LOLER (The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulation 1998) requires equipment used for lifting people to be Thoroughly Examined by a Competent Person in accordance with a scheme of thorough examination or at intervals of not greater than six months and a record of that thorough examination (ROTE) to be kept. 'Lifting equipment' means work equipment for lifting / lowering loads including that which supports it. A corde lisse attached to a beam without roundsling is not lifting equipment but is in scope of PUWER 1998. A performer on a hoop lifted by a winch would fall under the scope of LOLER 1998 since it is lifting a person. Lifting equipment not designed to lift a person should employ a factor of safety twice that of that normally used for lifting.
- A Competent Person is defined as someone who has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to carry out the work safely.
- Rigging and other equipment for aerial performance, should be designed and installed by someone who understands and has experience of the dynamic forces being applied to them by a circus performer.
- You should ensure that the person carrying out thorough examinations of lifting equipment has the appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge and experience of the equipment, to enable them to detect defects or weaknesses and to assess their importance in relation to the safety and continued use of the lifting equipment.

- With regard to your own equipment, and in particular Circus Equipment, you may feel that your own experience and training, along with the manufacturer's guidance, is enough to make you competent.
- You should ensure lifting equipment is thoroughly examined and the ROTE is capable of being produced as a written copy.
- Work equipment also needs to be inspected but the record for smaller items can be a tag or other simple method. Larger items of work equipment that create a risk, such as a trapeze portique, should have a report on inspection that accompanies the equipment to the site where you are performing.