



EMPTY DRUMS ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR LIFTING

Re-using empty drums for storing, lifting and transporting heavy material is dangerous.

In many workplaces 200 litre drums are being re-used for storing and transporting waste materials, such as scrap metal. The drums are lifted by cranes or hoists using wires or hooks. Holes are cut in the sides for this purpose.

The risks to safety

There is a substantial risk to workers from:

- Wires breaking during lifting
- Wires or hooks tearing through the holes cut in the drums (pictured)
- The sides or bottom of the drum collapsing due to excessive weight
- Risks increase when the drums are old, worn or rusty.
- There is also a risk of people being injured by coming into contact with sharp and often rusty edges of the drum.

The employer is responsible under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* for the safety of workers using the drums, even if the drums are supplied by others.

Drums are constructed as safe containers for their original products. They are not intended to be converted for other use.

People converting drums for lifting have responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and the *Occupational Health and Safety (Plant) Regulations 1995* as designers, manufacturers or suppliers of plant.

Recommendations

Use lifting containers specifically designed for storing, lifting and transporting the material. If any containers are to be stored in the open, provide drain holes to prevent rain water collecting inside.

Before any other drum is used for lifting it should be checked for suitability by a competent person and modified as required. This should include reinforcement of the rim, base and lifting holes or lugs.

Suitable published technical standards for reference should include Australian Standards AS1418.1 -Cranes (*including hoists and winches*) - *General* requirements for dynamic and other load factors and AS3990 - *Mechanical equipment - Steelwork* for permissible stresses.

Do not use a heat, flame or spark producing process, such as welding, cutting or grinding, for modifying a drum, unless the inside of the drum has been cleaned so that it no longer contains any chemical residue or dangerous vapours.

For further information:

Alert 912001 - October

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Australian Standards (available from Standards Australia www.standards.com.au) -

- AS1418.11 -Cranes (*including hoists and winches*) -*General requirements*
- AS3990 - Mechanical equipment - *Steelwork*

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985* and *The Occupational Health and Safety (Plant) Regulations 1995* are available from Information Victoria on 1300 366 356 or online at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au.

The *Code of Practice for Plant* is available online at WorkSafe Victoria's website -www.workcover.vic.gov.au

Contact your local WorkSafe office

This Alert is based on *Empty Drums - Not Meant for Lifting*, from Worksafe Western Australia's *Safetyline* magazine