

BS 7121-1 at a glance

Code of practice for safe use of cranes, Part 1: General

PLANNING

Lift categories

Each lift is categorised by its hazards, per BS 7121-1.

Basic

Known weight, no significant hazards
Generic lift plan allowed

Intermediate

Significant hazards
Task-specific risk assessment and method statement

Complex

People, shared loads or exceptional hazards
Appointed person visits, plans and attends

FEWER HAZARDS

MORE PLANNING

MORE HAZARDS

For every lift

- A written lift plan from the appointed person
- A briefing for the team from the crane supervisor before work starts
- One person directing the crane, though anyone can signal an emergency stop
- Repeated loads kept to 70% to 80% of rated capacity, unless rated for full-load duty

ON SITE

Before you lift

Checks for each lift, based on BS 7121-1.



Ground assessed

Checked by a competent person.



Crane set up to plan

Outriggers and set-up match the plan.



Wind checked

Within the maximum speed in the plan.



Power lines checked

Isolated, or GS6 exclusion zones in place.



Load weight known

Weight and centre of gravity confirmed.



Accessories checked

In date and rated for the load.



Area controlled

Exclusion zone set and kept clear.



Team briefed

Everyone knows the plan and the signals.

OFTEN MISREAD

Common mix-ups

Points people often get wrong.

Used as the benchmark

It has no legal force of its own. HSE and the courts treat it as good practice.

You plan a hired lift

On crane hire, you provide the appointed person and plan the lift.

Categories can rise

Hazards from the load or the site can push a lift into a higher category.

Use a contract lift instead

With no lifting expertise of your own, the standard points to a contract lift.

WHO DOES WHAT

The lifting team

Appointed person

Plans the lift and controls it throughout.

Crane supervisor

Supervises the lift on site and can stop it.

Crane operator

Runs the crane to the maker's instructions.

Slinger-signaller

Slings the load and signals the operator.

Signaller

Relays signals when the operator cannot see the slinger.

Crane coordinator

Orders movements where cranes share a site.

Source: BS 7121-1:2016, Code of practice for safe use of cranes, Part 1: General, published by BSI and described here in our own words. Legal duties include LOLER 1998 in Great Britain and LOLER (NI) 1999 in Northern Ireland. **Last reviewed 1 October 2026.** A summary, not the standard itself.

