

Instructions for the use of: Soft Steels

The information in this leaflet must be passed to the user of the equipment, who must be suitably trained in the use of this equipment

This document is issued in accordance with the requirements of Section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, amended March 1988 and the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008 (machinery Directive). It outlines the care and safe use of wire rope roundslings known as SOFT STEELS. It should be read in conjunction with the requirements for general purpose slinging practice, given overleaf, which form an integral part of these instructions.

This information is of a general nature only covering the main points for the safe use of wire rope soft steels. It may be necessary to supplement this information for specific applications.

ALWAYS:

- Ensure the operator is fully trained to use Soft Steels
- Ensure the Maximum Lifting Load information on the blue label is read and understood
- Ensure the mode factor information on the blue label has been read and understood
- Store and handle soft steels correctly.
- Inspect soft steels and accessories before use and before placing into storage.
- Follow safe slinging practices.
- Position the bight for choke lift at 120°(natural angle).
- Apply correct mode factor for the slinging arrangement.
- Use protection (to avoid cutting, friction etc) and fittings which allow the sling to form smooth radii.

NEVER:

- Attempt to shorten, knot or tie soft steels.
- Expose soft steels to direct heat or flames.
- Use soft steels at temperatures below 0°C or 80°C without consulting the supplier.
- Expose soft steels to chemicals without consulting the supplier.
- Shock load soft steels.

Selecting the Correct Sling

Soft Steels are available in a range of sizes in endless sling form. Select the slings to be used and plan the lift taking the following into account:

Capacity - the sling must be both long enough and strong enough for the load and the slinging method.

Apply the mode factor for the slinging method.

For use at temperatures exceeding 80°C or below 0°C refer to the suppliers instructions.

If the slings are to be used in multi-leg arrangement the angle formed between the legs should not be less than 30° or greater than 90°.

Storing and Handling Soft Steels

Never return wet, damaged or contaminated slings to storage. They should be cleaned with clear water and dried naturally. Never force dry soft steels

The storage area should be dry, clean, free of any contaminants and shaded from direct sunlight.

Do not alter, modify or repair a soft steel but refer such matters to a Competent Person and/or supplier.

Using Soft Steels Safely

Do not attempt lifting operations unless you understand the use of the equipment, the slinging procedures and the mode factors to be applied.

Do not use defective slings or accessories.

Check for correct engagement with fittings and appliances, ensuring smooth radii are formed which allow the sling to assume its naturally flattened form under load. Do not overcrowd fittings.

Position the bight for a choke lift at the natural (120°) angle to prevent friction being generated.

Keep labels away from hooks and fittings.

Take the load steadily and avoid shock loads.

Do not leave suspended loads unattended. In an emergency cordon off the area.

Do not overload Soft Steels.

In-service Inspection and Maintenance

Maintenance requirements are minimal. Soft Steels may be cleaned with clear water. Remember that weak chemical solutions will become increasingly stronger by evaporation

The wire rope must be inspected using the inspection hole, the casing should move to allow all the wire rope to be seen and the termination checked as secure.

Soft Steels are not manufactured to the EN standard for Round Slings (7:1 Safety Factor) but to the EN Standard for Wire Rope Slings and are therefore rated on a 5:1 Safety Factor.

Regularly inspect soft steels and if any defects are found, withdraw the sling from service immediately and refer the sling to a Competent Person for thorough examination. These defects include but are not restricted to: illegible markings; heat damage; burns; chemical damage, broken or kinked wire strands.

Their inspection includes ensuring that the two ends of wire rope are secured together. The soft steel does not have to be destroyed if that casing is damaged as with Polyester Round Slings, as the casing is not an integral part of the application. It is up to the discretions of the user when the soft steel is no longer fit for purpose and if unsure then refer to the competent person.

In the case of re-selling and/or hire of equipment, this information must be passed onto the end user

Further information can be obtained from:

- BS EN 13414-1:2003 + A2: 2008
- BS EN 12385 Steel Wire Ropes – Safety
- BS EN 13411 Terminations for Steel Wire Rope – Safety

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GENERAL PURPOSE SLINGING PRACTICE

This information should be read in conjunction with the instructions for use, given overleaf, of which it forms an integral part and with any specific instructions issued by the supplier.

This information is of a general nature only covering the main points for the safe use of various types of slings for general lifting purposes.

ALWAYS:

- Plan the lift, having established the weight of the load and prepare the landing area ensuring that it will take the weight and is large enough to take the load.
- Check slings and equipment are free of damage, use slings/slinging methods suitable for the load and protect slings from sharp edges and corners.
- Attach the sling securely to the load and appliance and position hooks to face outwards.
- Ensure the load is balanced and will not tilt or fall.
- Keep fingers, toes etc clear when tensioning slings and when landing loads.
- Ensure that the load is free to be lifted.
- Make a trial lift and trial lower.

NEVER:

- Use damaged slings or accessories.
- Twist, knot or tie slings.
- Hammer slings into position.
- Overload slings due to the weight of the load or the mode of use.
- Trap slings when landing the load.
- Drag slings over floors etc or attempt to pull trapped slings from under loads.
- Allow personnel to ride on loads.

Sling Configurations and Rating

Slings are available in single, two, three and four leg or endless form. In practice it will be found that chain, wire rope and fibre rope slings are available in any of these configurations but that flat woven webbing is limited to single leg and endless whilst roundslings are only supplied in endless form. The maximum load that a sling may lift in use will be governed by the slinging arrangement (mode of use) and may vary from the marked SWL. In the case of textile slings the SWL for the various modes of use is usually given on the information label. In other cases it is necessary to multiply the marked SWL by a mode factor.

The following three simple rules will ensure that the sling is not overloaded. In some cases this will mean that the sling will be under utilised although this is unlikely to hinder the user unduly. Where the maximum utilisation is required reference should be made to a Competent Person who understands the factors involved and who can perform the necessary calculations.

- (1) For straight lift never exceed the marked SWL and in the case of multi-leg slings the specified angle or range of angles.
- (2) When using slings in choke hitch multiply the marked SWL by 0.8 to obtain the reduced maximum load the sling may lift ie reduce the safe working load by 20%.
- (3) With multi-leg slings, when using less than the full number of legs, reduce the maximum load in proportion to the number of legs in use. Simply multiply the marked SWL by the number of legs in use expressed as a fraction of the total thus: one leg of a two leg sling = $\frac{1}{2}$ marked SWL, three legs of a four leg sling = $\frac{3}{4}$ marked SWL and so on.

Operative Training

Slings should only be used by trained operatives who understand the methods of rating and application of mode factors

Safe use of Slings

- o Good slinging practice must ensure that the load is as safe and secure in the air as it was on the ground and that no harm is done to the load, lifting equipment, other property or persons.
- o Establish the weight of the load, ensure the lifting method is suitable and inspect the sling and attachments for obvious defects. Prepare the landing area making sure the floor is strong enough to take the load. Follow any specific instructions from the supplier.
- o Ensure the lifting point is over the centre of gravity. Any loose parts of the load should be removed or secured. Secure the sling firmly to the load by hooks onto lifting points or shackles etc. The sling must not be twisted, knotted or kinked in any way.
- o Use packing to prevent damage to the sling from corners or edges and to protect the load.
- o Do not exceed the SWL or rated angle. Any choke angle must not exceed 120° and any basket 90°.
- o Do not hammer, force or wedge slings or accessories into position; they must fit freely.
- o When attaching more than one sling to the hook of the appliance use a shackle to join the slings and avoid overcrowding the hook.
- o Use an established code of signals to instruct the crane driver.
- o Ensure the load is free to be lifted and not, for example, bolted down.
- o Check that there are no overhead obstacles such as power lines.
- o Keep fingers, toes etc clear ensuring they do not become trapped when lifting, lowering or controlling loads.
- o Make a trial lift by raising the load a little to ensure it is balanced, stable and secure and if not lower it and adjust the slinging arrangement.
- o Where appropriate use tag lines to control the load.
- o Except where special provision is made, do not allow anyone to pass under or ride upon the load. The area should be kept clear.
- o Make a trial set down, ensure the sling will not become trapped and the load will not tip when the slings are released. Use supports which are strong enough to sustain the load without crushing.
- o Never drag slings over floors etc or attempt to drag a trapped sling from under a load.
- o Never use a sling to drag a load.
- o Place the hooks of free legs back onto the master link and take care to ensure that empty hooks do not become accidentally engaged.
- o Never use slings in contact with chemicals or heat without the manufacturers approval.
- o Never use damaged or contaminated slings.
- o On completion of the lift return all equipment to proper storage.

Further information can be obtained from:

- LEEA Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Lifting Equipment.
- EN13414
- HSE Guidance Note GS39 - Training of Crane Drivers and Slings.
- Various British Standards covering individual products.

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