

Weighing equipment in use for trade

This leaflet contains a summary of the main requirements of weights and measures legislation enforced by the trading standards service on weighing equipment in use for trade. The controls over such equipment depend on its type of construction and the use to which it is put. This leaflet relates to weighing equipment that determines the final quantity of the goods delivered to the customer. Weighing equipment used during a production process, e.g. to check ingredients or as a check scale for customer use only, are not in use for trade provided there is a further final check over a stamped scale.

All weighing equipment in use for trade must be suitable for its intended purpose and be sufficiently accurate.

Non-automatic weighing equipment

Non-automatic weighing equipment used must be accurate and approved for trade use.

Non-automatic weighing instruments, i.e. those that require an operator to place and/or remove the items from the scale pan, are either 'passed as fit for use for trade' by an inspector of weights and measures (trading standards officer) or an 'approved verifier' (a person who is officially authorised to carry out the same verification duty of an inspector).

The inspector or approved verifier checks that the equipment is suitable for its intended purpose and that it is sufficiently accurate. Such equipment may bear the crown stamp for existing equipment still in use or, for all new equipment, the European approval stickers shown in this leaflet.

An example of a crown stamp is shown below:



Most new designs of electronic scales do not have to be 'stamped' by an inspector. Instead, they will have to bear a green sticker with the letter 'M' on it in black, together with the approved verifier's identification sticker and other markings, including the mark 'CE'.





These green 'use for trade' stickers and verification stickers can only be placed on the equipment by an approved verifier or an inspector. Similar controls exist for equipment required to be crown stamped.

These markings will be readily visible by external inspection.

Non-automatic weighing equipment that is rejected as fit for trade use

If the equipment does not bear the stamp or stickers, it must not be used for trade purposes. It is also an offence to have or use seriously incorrect equipment, or to alter equipment that is incorrect after it has been stamped.

If an inspector finds equipment that is incorrect, which has a lead seal crown stamp, it may be obliterated by a six-pointed star. The equipment must not be used until repaired and re-stamped.



The following illustration shows the same sequence for equipment having the green 'M' sticker from rejection with the six-pointed star to re-verification with the crown sticker. The green 'M' and number stickers are NOT removed or covered; Only the Crown sticker sequence is added to show the history of the equipment as illustrated below.



Alternatively, a notice may be given by an inspector requiring repair within a specified period. It is, therefore, prudent to keep more complex equipment maintained by a competent service organisation.

Automatic weighing equipment

Scales that are fully automated to fill a package without the intervention of an operator are not normally passed as 'fit for use for trade' but are still required to be suitable for the process and sufficiently accurate. You are required to carry out your own checks to make sure that the equipment is properly

maintained and accurate in addition to carrying out checks on the finished product for weight control (see our separate leaflet on ['Guidance notes on average quantity'](#)).

Weights

Weights that are in use for trade in conjunction with weighing equipment must be stamped with the crown stamp. This is found in a lead plug at the base of the weight. It is a criminal offence to use any weight for trade if it shows the six-pointed star, as this is the sign that it has been rejected by an inspector.

Maintenance and use of weighing equipment

Scales can give incorrect readings because of poor practice or misuse. You should note the following regarding common problems with scales:

It is most important to use scales on a level surface - most will incorporate a level indicator device, so make sure it reads level before trying to adjust for a zero balance display.

Scales must be correctly balanced before use, with any indicators reading zero (on electronic scales, the digital indications should not be blank prior to weighing). If the scale does not start at zero, incorrect readings may be given.

Strong draughts, caused by a breeze or air conditioning systems, can affect some scales. Make sure you consider these problems when siting the scale.

Keep the scale pan clean and free from debris underneath the pan itself. Build up of debris or other matter under or adjacent to the scale pan can interfere with the weighing operation.

Regular checks of the scale with stamped weights will ensure that you do not inadvertently use a faulty or unjust scale for trade purposes.

Where possible, keep a record of the checks carried out, identifying what was done, when it was done, and who carried it out.