businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Weighing equipment for legal use

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

To fully understand this guidance, it is important to note the difference between the United Kingdom and Great Britain:

- UK: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- GB: England, Scotland and Wales

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Weights and measures (also known as 'legal metrology') legislation enforced by Trading Standards services places requirements on weighing equipment for use when goods are bought, sold or produced. It covers weighing equipment that determines the final quantity of goods delivered to customers.

The legislation also applies to equipment used for weighing patients for the purpose of medical monitoring, diagnosis and treatment, as well as weighing equipment used for making up medicines on prescription in

pharmacies and determination of mass in analyses carried out in medical and pharmaceutical laboratories.

There are other weighing applications where this legislation applies: the calculation of tolls, tariffs, taxes, bonuses, penalties, etc based on weight; and expert opinions given in court proceedings concerning weights and the application of laws.

Weighing equipment used during a production process (for example, to determine the weight of ingredients) does not need to comply with this legislation, neither do check scales for consumers' use in supermarkets etc, provided there is a further final weight check over an authorised, accurate and correctly marked weighing machine.

Equipment types, uses and construction

The controls over weighing equipment depend on its type of construction and the use to which it is put. All weighing equipment that this legislation applies to must be suitable for its intended purpose in terms of its construction, weighing capacity and level of accuracy. It must indicate weight correctly (within defined limits).

Weighing equipment can be either:

- 'Non-automatic', where goods are placed on the equipment by the user and the weight indication is displayed and can be printed if required
  or
- 'Automatic', as used in production lines (for example, where goods pass over the equipment to ensure the quantity is correct without intervention by an operator)

Weighing machines for legal use have to be constructed to a particular Government specification and bear particular conformity markings, stamps, stickers or other indications to show that the equipment complies with these requirements. The required indications have changed over the years and examples are outlined later in this guide.

Additionally, weights used in conjunction with weighing equipment must be correctly constructed and bear particular indications to show that they are suitable for legal use.

When considering using any weighing equipment for legal use, it is recommended that you consult your local Trading Standards service. They will be able to advise on the suitability of equipment, which is particularly important in relation to second-hand equipment.

Construction, type approval and verification

Weighing equipment used for legal purposes must be accurate and manufactured in accordance with an approved type approval or examination certificate.

Weighing instruments are either:

- Passed as 'fit for use for trade' by an inspector of weights and measures or an approved verifier
  or (and more commonly these days)
- 'Qualified' for legal use by an approved manufacturer, an approved or notified body, an inspector of weights and measures or, following adjustment or repair, an approved verifier

Stamps, stickers and other markings

When weighing equipment for legal use has been made and qualified as conforming to all manufacturing and accuracy requirements, the required stamps, stickers and other indications are attached to it by the manufacturer or approved qualifier. Some equipment is required to be tested and have its final approval stamps applied when the equipment has been installed in its place of use (weighbridges, for example).

As can be seen, the appearance of these markings has changed as legislation has been developed and amended over the years. When considering the purchase of new or used weighing equipment the markings, stickers and stamps may not be exactly as illustrated below due to ongoing changes. Local Trading Standards services will, however, be able to advise on the current stamp and sticker requirements for particular equipment.

The following examples of stamps and stickers may be found on weighing equipment that has been approved for legal use.

The crown stamp, qualifier's identification stickers, etc

The crown stamp, year of application and official number of the inspector of weights and measures who passed the equipment as fit for trade use is found on a lead plug embedded into older, traditional weighing equipment.



The M sticker indicates that the equipment it is attached to has been manufactured in accordance with legal metrology requirements. The year of manufacture appears next to the M.



The approved body / notified body sticker indicates which organisation examined and approved the equipment as being in accordance with all manufacturing and accuracy requirements.



The requalification sticker indicates that the equipment has been repaired or adjusted since it was manufactured, to maintain manufacturing and accuracy requirements. The examples below are those used by, respectively, inspectors, approved verifiers and approved manufacturers.



CE and UKCA marking

For the UK market, products assessed against EU rules by an EU notified body will be CE-marked, followed by the M symbol and year of manufacture.

The CE mark indicates that the equipment has been manufactured in accordance with all relevant EU legislation (including low voltage electromagnetic compatibility, restriction on hazardous substances, etc).



For the GB market only, products assessed against UK rules by a UK approved body will be UKCA-marked, followed by the M symbol and year of manufacture.



On 1 October 2024, the Government introduced legislation permitting the CE mark to be used indefinitely for most products. This follows the previous date of 31 December 2024 by which relevant products on sale in GB were required to use the UKCA mark.

For more information on these marks, please see 'CE / UKCA marking'.

Guidance on placing UKCA- or CE-marked products on the GB market can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Data plate

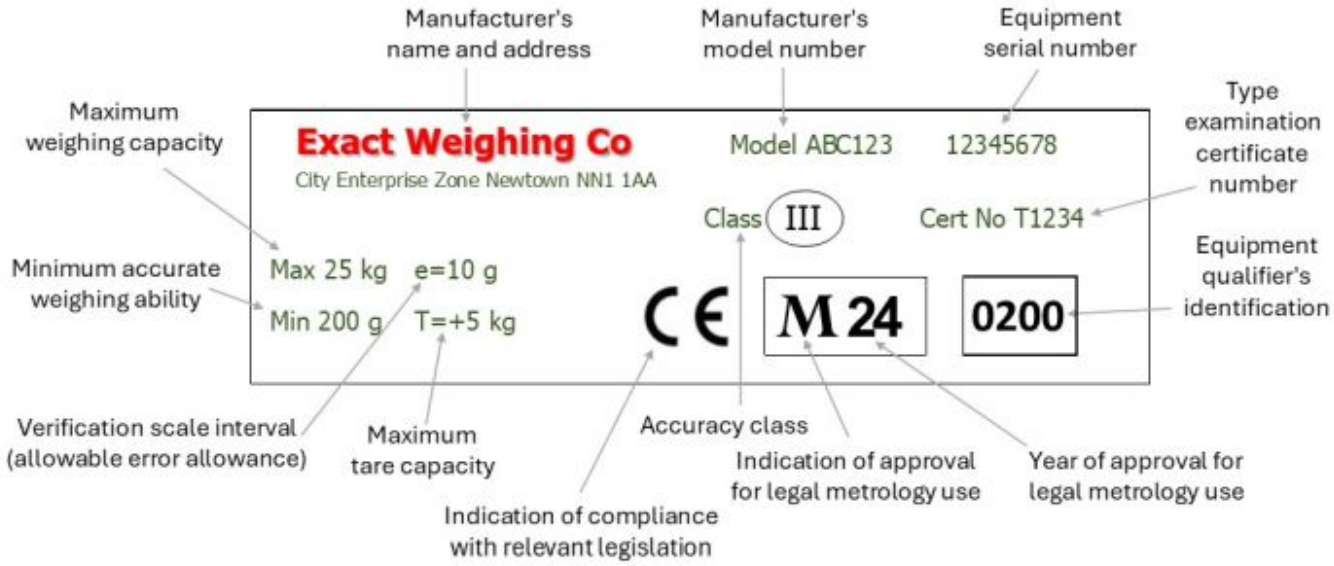
Approved weighing equipment is also required to bear various other indications relating to the weighing capacity, accuracy, etc, as detailed on the approval certification, with more modern equipment having the required information on an attached 'data plate' or tamper-proof label. The data plate or tamper-proof label (as illustrated below) may also have the required stickers attached so that all required information is contained on the instrument in one easily discernible position.

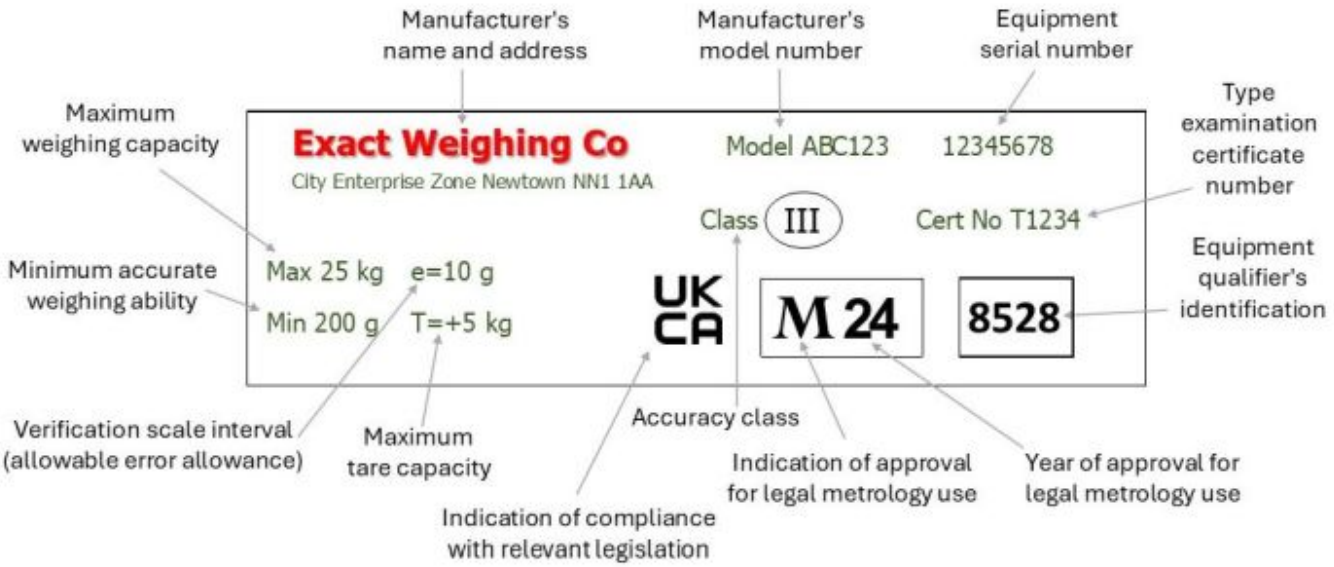
Newer equipment may have the manufacturer's or importer's name, address and trade mark displayed on the data plate, as well as additional information relating to different tare intervals, safe loads, operational temperatures, etc.

The data plate also commonly includes information relating to electrical rating, power consumption, etc.

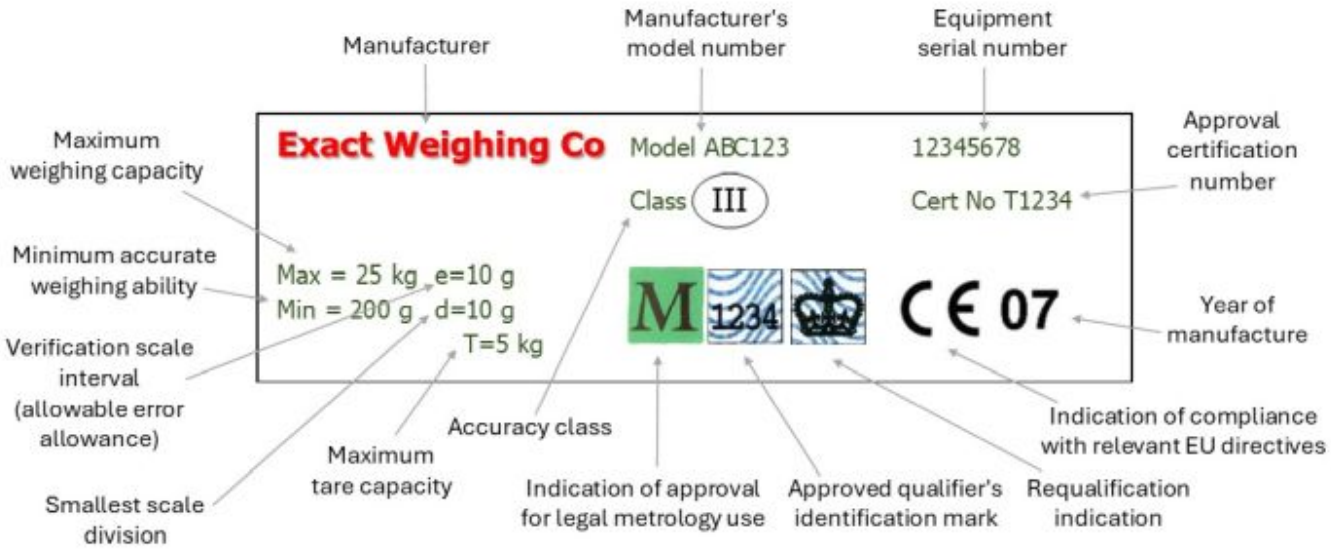
Newer equipment may have some of the required markings indicated on the equipment's display screen rather than permanently displayed on the data plate.

Typical data plates





Typical data plate pre-2017



Classes of weighing equipment

The accuracy of approved weighing equipment is divided into four classes, and careful consideration must be given to which accuracy class should be used for particular weight determination.

Class	Accuracy	Use
(I)	Special	Precious metals, precious stones, pharmaceutical purposes, etc
(II)	High	Precious metals, precious stones, pharmaceutical purposes, etc
(III)	Medium	General weighing purposes
(IIII)	Ordinary	Ballast and other building materials, waste disposal and recycling purposes

Weighing equipment that has been rejected for legal use

When considering the purchase and use of second-hand weighing equipment for trade purposes, one stamp or sticker to particularly look out for is the six-pointed star.



The six-pointed star stamp or sticker is applied to approved equipment that has been 'rejected', as it was found on inspection to be inaccurate or not in compliance with manufacturing requirements. It also indicates that the equipment has not since been adjusted or repaired.

It is an offence to use weighing equipment bearing a six-pointed star indication for legal purposes.

It may be possible for 'rejected' weighing equipment to be adjusted or otherwise repaired and submitted to the appropriate body for requalification.

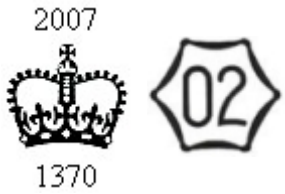
Automatic weighing equipment

Automatic weighing machines are capable of determining or checking the weight of items without the intervention of an operator; they are usually used in specialised circumstances within a production process. Their approval requirements and usage circumstances are different to non-automatic equipment. and more detailed advice concerning their suitability for use can be obtained from your local Trading Standards service.

Weights

Weights that are required to be used in conjunction with approved weighing equipment must bear an indication that they are sufficiently accurate and have been manufactured in accordance with legal requirements.

The indication will normally be found stamped into a lead plug in the base of the weight, and take the form of the traditional crown stamp and date.



As with weighing equipment, any weights that bear a six-pointed star stamp were found to be inaccurate when they were last inspected and would be illegal for use for legal weighing purposes.

Maintenance and use of weighing equipment

Weighing equipment can give incorrect readings because of poor practice or misuse. The following points should be noted to ensure continued accuracy:

- Weighing equipment should be used on a stable, vibration free, level surface. Most equipment incorporates a level-indicator device, which must indicate that the equipment is level when in use
- Weighing equipment must be correctly balanced before use, with any indicators reading zero (on electronic weighing equipment, the digital indications should not be blank prior to weighing). If the weighing equipment does not indicate zero before use, incorrect readings may be given
- Strong draughts, caused by a breeze or air conditioning systems, can affect some weighing equipment; this should be considered when selecting the position in which the equipment will be used
- The weighing pan should be kept clean and free from any debris or obstructions beneath it. Build-up of debris or other material under or adjacent to the weighing pan can interfere with the accuracy of the equipment
- Regular checks of the accuracy of weighing equipment should be carried out using known quantities, such as stamped weights, to help ensure that weighing equipment does not become faulty or unjust
- A record of the checks that are carried out on weighing equipment should be kept; it must identify when they are done, the action taken, the results of the checks and who carried them out, together with any necessary remedial action taken
- A maintenance contract with a weighing machine service company should be considered, especially where weighing equipment is in constant use or very high levels of weighing accuracy need to be maintained

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: May 2026

Key legislation

- Weighing Equipment (Non-automatic Weighing Machines) Regulations 2000
- Non-automatic Weighing Instruments Regulations 2016

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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