

## FAQs for Industry Safe Weight Limit

Revision: 1.5

Date 31/10/2025



### Questions about the policy development

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| Why is a safe weight limit policy required?  | <p>Workers weights have been increasing over the last 60 years. Over a third of offshore workers are now above 100kg.</p> <p>This presents multiple risks related to safe evacuation via lifeboat or helicopter and rescue from the sea or installation.</p> <p>Installation duty holders must ensure that all persons can be rescued.</p>                                                                                                                                  |
| What is the OEUK offshore safe weight limit? | <p>The clothed weight limit for offshore workers is 124kg, including a 0.7kg safety margin. This is to ensure safe evacuation and rescue, particularly by search and rescue helicopter winch.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| What is the most acute issue?                | <p>The search and rescue helicopters in the UK, Norway, and Netherlands all have the same type of winch. When you consider the weight of the winchman paramedic, and the rescue kit it only leaves a remaining 124.7kg for a patient.</p> <p>Anyone requiring rescue by search and rescue helicopter over 124.7kg cannot be guaranteed rescue.</p>                                                                                                                          |
| Why not get a stronger winch or winch cable. | <p>The Winch has been certified for operating with human external cargo by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency which are followed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority. Changes in specifications and certification can take years.</p> <p>Even with a stronger winch the winchman will still have to manually get the stretcher into the helicopter which is obviously harder with heavier casualties.</p> <p>It is not realistic that this issue can be resolved.</p> |
| Why can't we get lighter stretchers?         | <p>HMCG has suggested this is not possible in the short term and there are other issues to consider including the two crew being able to handle larger casualties into the helicopter once winched up.</p> <p>OEUK continues to work with search and rescue helicopter providers to see what can be done here. Rescue stretchers are complex and must include features such as flotation devices and must be compatible with the helicopter fit-out to allow them to be</p> |

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|                                                                                                                       | <p>secured into the helicopter for the safety of the casualty, other considerations include the width of the stretcher vs width of casualty therefore the designs are quite complex.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Could the weight of helicopter winchmen continue to increase, squeezing the remaining figure for the casualty.</p> | <p>The winchmen paramedics are already below the average weight of offshore workers, due to the highly physical nature of their job they are in good shape, and physically fit, it is not believed to be an issue.</p> <p>The physically demanding nature of the job is also why we can't just find smaller winchmen!</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>Is this problem specific to offshore oil and gas?</p>                                                              | <p>Yes and no. The weight increase is common across all of the UK population and aligns with NHS data. However, as oil and gas workers are 96% male and many are in the 45-50 age bracket means that the issue is amplified in our workforce.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>Does the weight limit apply to all offshore installations?</p>                                                     | <p>Yes, it applies to installations with accepted Safety Cases under the Offshore Installations (Offshore Safety Directive) (Safety Case etc.) Regulations 2015</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>How is "clothed weight" defined?</p>                                                                               | <p>It means the worker's weight when dressed in compliance with the industry clothing travel policy for the relevant season.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Do other countries have safety weight limits?</p>                                                                  | <p>Norway has a weight restriction within it's medical and the Netherlands are also planning to limit workers weight offshore.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>My installation has a helideck can the helicopter not just land and pick up a casualty.</p>                        | <p>On many installations the helicopter can land most of the time, it is rare that the conditions would require a winch rescue, however the (Prevention of Fire and Explosion and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995 require that installation duty holders have means of evacuation, escape and rescue for all people.</p> <p>For some installations such as floating installations such as semi-sub or FPSOs the conditions that exclude helideck landings are more common.</p> <p>The large search and rescue helicopter are too heavy for the helideck on some older normally unmanned installations.</p> |
| <p>Why are marine vessels not included?</p>                                                                           | <p>The marine industry has different safety regulations than offshore installations. The industry is governed by a mixture of international and national legislation. There are different regulatory expectations and duty of care.</p> <p>Nevertheless, it is likely that the risks to heavier workers will be addressed in the marine sector in due course too.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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| How many workers may be impacted?                                      | OEUK estimate as many as 3,000 workers will be impacted to varying degrees with most able to achieve the weight limit through weight loss.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Does the policy exclude muscular people who are fit and healthy?       | No, the issue related to weight regardless of fitness or muscle mass. That is because those individuals could also fall ill or be injured requiring rescue by SAR helicopter winch.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Have the unions been consulted?                                        | We have kept Unions informed of the policy development and have listed to their concerns about workers losing their jobs. This has helped us form the policy including the phased supportive implementation plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| How can I find out more information?                                   | OEUK has a detailed comms plan and has all relevant documents available on their website, plus a communications pack for employers.<br><br>We'll also be keeping people up to date via social media.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| How frequent is the need for winching- is the policy disproportionate. | The frequency of winching will depend on the installation type, with fixed installations requiring it less than NUIs in the SNS for example where S92 often cannot land under any conditions. The government SAR helicopter reports a small number – just 2 in three years. However, the industry SAR helicopters who are often deployed first report 15% or casualty evacuations are by winch.<br><br>Although offshore helicopter winch evacuation is a major factor in determining the weight limit it is not the only risk that the weight limit mitigates including aspects related to lifeboats, stretcher rescue etc.<br><br>The legal duties apply to all persons. |
| <b>Questions about the policy</b>                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| When does the policy come into effect?                                 | The policy begins on 1 <sup>st</sup> November, but restrictions do not begin immediately there are 3 phases: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction &amp; Awareness</li> <li>2. Transition</li> <li>3. Mandatory Implementation Date</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| What happens during the <b>Introduction and Awareness Phase</b> ?      | The Introduction and Awareness Phase runs from 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2026.<br><br>During this time, you will hear from OEUK about the policy and employers will explain what the policy means for you and what support will be available for those affected.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|                                                           | <p>There is no action required during this phase beyond taking the time to understand what comes next and what it means for you.</p> <p>However, this is also a great time to begin to lose weight if you are concerned about getting below the 124kg limit</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| What happens during the <b>Transition</b> Phase?          | <p>The Transition phase runs from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2026</p> <p>During this time people with a weight above 124kg will need to begin to lose weight. This 6-month period should be long enough for most workers to get below the 124kg weight limit.</p> <p>Medical examiners will begin to issue reduced duration certificates for workers over or close to the 124kg limit to ensure that workers are aware of the up-coming restrictions.</p> <p>OEUK will continue to communicate the changes, and you should engage with your employer to find out about the range of options available to support your weight loss.</p> <p>We want you to have the greatest success during this time.</p> |
| What happens at the <b>Mandatory Implementation</b> date? | <p>The Mandatory Implementation date is 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026.</p> <p>After this date no workers over 124kg will be allowed to travel offshore.</p> <p>You will not be given a medical certificate by an OEUK medical examiner.</p> <p>Prior to mobilisation you may be asked to check your weight before travelling to the heliport to ensure that your weight has not crept up over the 124kg in the time since your last medical. You should let your employer know if you think you are over the 124kg before mobilising.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Will there be support for workers needing to lose weight? | <p>Yes, employers are encouraged to provide access to weight loss programmes and support services, with NHS and other resources signposted in the guidance.</p> <p>Step Change in Safety will be providing material on healthy living and weight loss throughout October, November and December 2025.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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| What happens if I exceed the weight limit at my OEUK medical?                                                                                               | <p>If you go for an OEUK medical during the Transition phase you will be issued a medical with a reduced duration to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2026. You will have to attend a medical assessment shortly before then to demonstrate your weight is below 124kg.</p> <p>After the mandatory compliance phase from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026, you will not be issued a fitness to work certificate if you are over 124kg.</p>     |
| Will there be different arrangements for those using the OEUK medical abroad?                                                                               | <p>The OEUK medical is envisaged as a UK only document and hence there is no consideration of the implementation internationally, so following the medical will result in restrictions being applied for those using the OEUK medical internationally too.</p> <p>We will keep this aspect under review however we don't currently plan any changes or dispensations at this stage.</p>                                           |
| Can I still travel offshore if I have a valid medical certificate but weigh over 124kg at the heliport?                                                     | <p>Yes, until the Mandatory Compliance date of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026.</p> <p>After the mandatory compliance date, you will not be permitted to travel offshore if you weigh over 124kg at check-in, regardless of your certificate</p>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| What happens if I've measured myself at home on the bathroom scales and I was just below 124kg but I am slightly over it a few hours later at the heliport? | <p>After 1<sup>st</sup> November 2026 you will not be allowed to travel.</p> <p>Heliports have calibrated scales required by aviation regulations and these are regarded as the most accurate and authoritative weight.</p> <p>We hope these occasions are rare and disruption is minimal.</p> <p>You should contact your employer and operator before leaving the heliport to check their arrangements for this eventuality.</p> |
| What if my weight fluctuates during a trip offshore?                                                                                                        | <p>Our weight always fluctuates slightly hence there is a 0.7kg margin.</p> <p>There will not be a weight restriction on the homeward helicopter flight.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Does the weight limit apply to return (onshore) flights?                                                                                                    | <p>No, the restriction applies only to outbound (offshore) flights.</p> <p>There will not be a weight restriction on the homeward helicopter flight.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| <p>Why is it my clothed weight that is measured and what does this mean?</p> | <p>Your clothed weight including shoes in line with the existing travel policy will be used as it is representative of how you will be dressed at work, is practical at the heliport and relates to an existing policy that is well understood.</p> <p>You should attend an OEUK medical with clothing appropriate to the clothing policy at the time of the medical.</p> <p>The fully clothing policy can be found here:<br/> <a href="https://www.stepchangeinsafety.net/resources/standard-clothing-policy/">https://www.stepchangeinsafety.net/resources/standard-clothing-policy/</a>)</p> <div data-bbox="716 625 1390 1241"> <div>  <b>SUMMER</b><br/> <b>1st June to 30th September &gt; 10°C</b><br/> <b>2 layers</b> (inc one long sleeve top)<br/> <b>Suggested combination; t-shirt, jumper &amp; trousers</b> </div> <div>  <b>WINTER</b><br/> <b>1st October to 31st May &lt; 10°C</b><br/> <b>3 layers</b> (inc one long sleeve top)<br/> <b>Suggested combination; long sleeve top, short sleeve top, jumper &amp; trousers</b> </div> </div> |
| <p>What happens if somebody above 124kg is on a vessel in the 500m zone</p>  | <p>Nothing. The marine industry has a different medical process and different regulations.</p> <p>The restrictions detailed here relate to offshore travel only and the OEUK medical and are not a blanket restriction.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Does this limit affect rescue from water?</p>                             | <p>No, for helicopter rescue water rescue is a life saving situation where the search and rescue teams will do everything possible to rescue people.</p> <p>They will usually use a rescue strop not a stretcher giving 29kg of additional margin, and the winchman can cut suits to release trapped water.</p> <p>The limit does improve the likelihood of rescue from the water into EERV vessels and Fast Rescue Craft which have limitations on their mechanical lifting devices.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Are there exceptions for critical workers?</p>                            | <p>In rare cases where a worker is essential for safety or critical national infrastructure, a risk assessment and</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|                                                                                                 | additional mitigations may be considered, but this is not intended for routine operational staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| What if somebody does not lose weight?                                                          | <p>We hope all workers will chose to take the opportunity and support to lose weight but acknowledge that for some workers it may be very hard.</p> <p>Ultimately if a worker is over 124kg after the mandatory compliance date they will not be considered safe to be offshore and will not be able to work offshore.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| What about fit and muscular people who are very fit but above 124kg                             | <p>The weight limit is independent of fitness, health or muscle mass. If a person is above 124kg they cannot be guaranteed rescue and as such are covered by the limit. Therefore, it applies to all people.</p> <p>Research by medical experts indicates that the number of individuals in this category are likely to be smaller than first assumed but we do not have accurate data on this so OEUK will continue to monitor and consider the issue.</p> <p>One area we are investigating is whether longer duration certificates can be issued for those who are close to the weight limit but clearly have good control over their weight, healthy lifestyles etc.</p> |
| Will the policy be reviewed or updated?                                                         | OEUK will continue to review the policy in light of operational experience, legal developments, and stakeholder feedback                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| If read through all of these FAQs and I am still confused about expectations, what should I do? | <p>Firstly, you should contact your employer who will be able to talk with you and help you understand what it means for you and what support is available.</p> <p>You can also contact OEUK on <a href="mailto:info@oeuk.org.uk">info@oeuk.org.uk</a> and the Health and Safety Team will answer questions.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |