FAQ G14 - Can a textile sling be passed as fit for service if it has been marked with ink from a marker pen, assuming no visible signs of damage?

For many years the issue of information written on textile slings with marker pens, (both flat woven webbing and roundslings made of man-made fibers), has been debated. The reason is that due to the unknown chemical composition of the ink used there is an unknown element of risk requiring further investigation. Marker pen used as part of the manufacturing process are considered as acceptable and not detriment to safety as they are the responsibility of the manufacturer. However, marks added by others need to be evaluated and if found in service they need to be assessed by a competent person. In general LEEA advises users not to add additional marking to their slings without consultation with their supplier.

The use of marker pens on slings is a contentious issue due to the unknown composition of the ink, which may contain a variety of chemicals. These chemicals can interact with sling materials in unpredictable ways. For instance, while polyester is generally resistant to most mineral acids, it can be vulnerable to damage from alkaline substances. This variability in chemical resistance highlights the importance of understanding both the ink composition and the sling material before use.

Where possible, it is advisable to consult the sling manufacturer or supplier for guidance on marking practices.

While the presence of markings on a sling does not automatically render it unsafe, it does require careful assessment by a competent person during inspection. The examiner must be able to rule out any signs of chemical damage, which could result from the ink used. Typical indicators of such damage include brittleness in the sling fibers. Therefore, any markings should prompt closer scrutiny to ensure the integrity of the equipment is not compromised.

With regards to roundslings made of man-made fibers, they would also need to ensure that the pen has not penetrated the sleeve as you can afford a small amount of surface damage to the sleeve, but not the core. Unfortunately, a problem you should consider with round slings is that the sleeve can move around the core, which means that any damage to the core may not be in the location of the sleeve marker pen.

If the examiner is comfortable that no damage has occurred, then they may pass the sling as safe to use, provided there is no other type of damage evident. They should however bear in mind that damage can be time based and that chemicals can become more concentrated as they dry out, so regular user checks and interim inspections should also take this issue into account.

Lifting Equipment Engineers Association

3 Osprey Court
Hinchingbrooke Business Park
Huntingdon PE29 6FN
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1480 432801 • Email: mail@leeaint.com