
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1986 No. 1682

The Measuring Equipment (Measures of Length) Regulations 1986

PART I GENERAL

Citation, commencement and revocation

1.—(1) These regulations may be cited as the Measuring Equipment (Measures of Length) Regulations 1986 and shall come into operation on 27th October 1986.

(2) The Regulations specified in the Schedule to these Regulations are hereby revoked to the extent specified in column 2 of the Schedule.

Commencement Information

II Reg. 1 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations—

“the Act” means the Weights and Measures Act 1985;

“composite measure” means a measure of length where one of its principal scale marks is a surface and the other is a line, hole or mark;

“end measure” means a measure of length where its principal scale marks are formed by two surfaces;

“measure of length” means a linear measure set out in Part I of Schedule 1 to the Act;

“nominal length” means the maximum length in metric or imperial units which a measure of length is designed to measure in one measurement;

“prescribed limits of error” has the meaning set out in Regulation 24 below;

“principal scale marks” mean the two surfaces, lines, holes or marks (or combination thereof) on a measure of length the distance between which is the nominal length of the measure;

“the stamp” means the prescribed stamp⁽¹⁾; and

“terminal surface” means a surface forming one of the principal scale marks.

(1) See S.I. 1968/1615.

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Commencement Information

I2 Reg. 2 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Application

3.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2) below, these Regulations apply to measuring equipment for use for trade of the following class namely measures of length, and such measures are hereby prescribed for the purposes of section 11(1) of the Act.

(2) Except for this paragraph, paragraph (3) and Regulation 20 below, these Regulations do not apply to measures of length which bear the mark of EEC initial verification.

(3) In this Regulation, “mark of EEC initial verification” means the mark described in paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Measuring Instruments (EEC Requirements) Regulations 1980(2).

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Commencement Information

I3 Reg. 3 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

PART II

MATERIALS AND PRINCIPLES OF CONSTRUCTION AND MARKING OF MEASURES OF LENGTH

4. Subject to Regulation 5 below, every measure of length shall be made of—
- (a) carbon steel, including matt chrome-plated carbon steel, steel protected by a clear film or rust-resisting steel;
 - (b) brass;
 - (c) aluminium alloy, including anodised and stained aluminium alloy;
 - (d) glass-reinforced or opaque plastics;
 - (e) wood; or
 - (f) any other material of adequate stability.

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Commencement Information

I4 Reg. 4 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

5. Every measure of length shall be sufficiently strong and resistant to abrasion to withstand the wear and tear of ordinary use in trade.

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I5 Reg. 5 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

(2) The relevant amending instrument is S.I. 1985/1871.

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6. Where an end measure or composite measure is made of wood or other material of durability equal to or less than that of wood, the terminal surfaces shall have metal tips which shall be securely fixed to the wood or other material.

Commencement Information

I6 Reg. 6 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

7. The terminal surfaces of end measures and of composite measures shall be flat and perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the measure.

Commencement Information

I7 Reg. 7 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

8. Every rigid measure of length, including folding measures, shall be practically straight and free from flaws.

Commencement Information

I8 Reg. 8 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

9. Every flexible measure of length shall be constructed so that when it is stretched out on a flat surface its edges are practically straight and parallel.

Commencement Information

I9 Reg. 9 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

10. Winding devices for flexible measures of length shall be constructed so that they do not cause any permanent deformation of the measure.

Commencement Information

I10 Reg. 10 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

11. Where a measure of length is marked with a reference temperature, it shall be constructed so that a change of not more than 8 degrees Celsius above or below that temperature does not cause in normal use a variation in length exceeding the prescribed limit of error.

Commencement Information

I11 Reg. 11 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

12. Where a measure of length is marked with a tractive force, it shall be constructed so that a change of 10 per cent. above or below that force does not cause a variation in length exceeding the prescribed limit of error.

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Commencement Information

I12 Reg. 12 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

13.—(1) Every measure of length which is graduated shall be graduated clearly, indelibly and, subject to paragraph (2) below, regularly, so as to enable unambiguous readings to be made easily.

(2) Certain sections of a graduated measure of length may be subdivided more finely than other sections.

Commencement Information

I13 Reg. 13 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

14. Where the scale marks on a measure of length are lines these shall be straight, perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the measure of length and all of the same thickness, constant throughout their length.

Commencement Information

I14 Reg. 14 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

15. The numbering of graduated measures of length shall be—

- (a) (i) continuous; or
- (ii) partly continuous and partly repetitive; and
- (b) (i) parallel to the longitudinal axis of the measure of length; or
- (ii) perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the measure of length, depending on how the measure is designed to be read.

Commencement Information

I15 Reg. 15 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

16. Where a graduated measure of length is a folding measure, some of its numbering in close proximity to the joints may be omitted.

Commencement Information

I16 Reg. 16 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

17. Every measure of length shall be conspicuously, legibly and durably marked (in the case of a flexible measure, near the beginning of the measure) with the following items—

- (a) on each graduated side, its nominal length expressed in one only of the following units of measurement in full or by means of one of the following abbreviations or symbols only:—

metre	m
centimetre	cm
millimetre	mm

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yard	yd
foot	ft
inch	in;

- (b) the name or trade mark of the manufacturer of the measure; and
- (c) its tractive force, if it is a flexible measure with a nominal length exceeding five metres in metric units or ten feet in imperial units.

Commencement Information

I17 Reg. 17 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

18. Every measure of length which is not graduated or subdivided shall be marked conspicuously, legibly and durably with the words “not graduated” or “not subdivided”.

Commencement Information

I18 Reg. 18 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

19.—(1) Every measure of length may be marked (in the case of a flexible measure, near the beginning of the measure) with one or more of the following items—

- (a) the reference temperature;
- (b) where not required to be marked under Regulation 17 above, the tractive force;
- (c) the number of the British Standard published by the British Standards Institution that specifies requirements for the measure or other specification reference;
- (d) a model designation;
- (e) the country of manufacture; and
- (f) the material from which the measure has been made.

(2) Nothing in paragraph (1) above shall prohibit other markings on a measure of length, which do not cause confusion in use.

Commencement Information

I19 Reg. 19 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

PART III

MANNER OF USE FOR TRADE

20. No person shall use a measure of length for trade in such a manner as to expose it to environmental or other influences which will adversely affect its accuracy or function.

Commencement Information

I20 Reg. 20 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

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PART IV TESTING

21. Every measure of length submitted for testing shall be in a clean condition.

Commencement Information

I21 Reg. 21 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

22. Every measure of length shall be tested by comparison with an appropriate local or working standard linear measure using equipment and under conditions which are appropriate to the degree of accuracy required, taking the following factors into account—

- (a) the ambient temperature, when the standard and the measure of length being compared are of different materials;
- (b) the tensioning and support of flexible measures of length; and
- (c) the method of magnification for viewing.

Commencement Information

I22 Reg. 22 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

23. The inspector shall test the nominal length and, in the case of a graduated measure, such other graduations as he considers necessary.

Commencement Information

I23 Reg. 23 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

PART V SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Prescribed limits of error

24. The prescribed limits of error relating to measures of length shall be as follows:—

- (a) where the measure is designed to measure in metric units, 0.6 millimetre plus 0.4 millimetre per metre (rounded up to the next whole metre) of nominal length; and
- (b) where the measure is designed to measure in imperial units, 0.025 inch plus 0.015 inch per yard (rounded up to the next whole yard) of nominal length.

Commencement Information

I24 Reg. 24 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Passing as fit for use for trade

25. No measure of length shall be passed as fit for use for trade unless on testing—

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- (a) it complies with all the appropriate requirements of these Regulations;
- (b) it falls within the prescribed limits of error; and
- (c) the inspector is of the opinion that it is not constructed in a manner which facilitates fraudulent use.

Commencement Information

I25 Reg. 25 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Stamping

26.—(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3) below, measures of length shall be stamped with the stamp near one end or, in the case of graduated measures, near the beginning of the measure on each graduated side.

(2) In the case of flexible measures of length the stamp may be placed on a metal plug, disc or label permanently secured to the measure.

(3) No measure of length shall be stamped with the stamp if it bears—

- (a) any mark which, in the opinion of the inspector, might reasonably be mistaken for the stamp;
- (b) any indication of a class of accuracy to which the measure belongs; or
- (c) any other statement or mark (other than the stamp) which purports to be or, in the opinion of the inspector, might reasonably be mistaken for an expression of approval or guarantee of accuracy by any body or person.

Commencement Information

I26 Reg. 26 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Obliteration of stamps

27. The stamp shall be obliterated on any measure of length by an inspector, in accordance with the requirements of these Regulations, by means of punches or pincers of suitable sizes of a six-pointed star design as shown in the following illustration:—

Commencement Information

I27 Reg. 27 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

28.—(1) An inspector shall obliterate the stamp on any measure of length which—

- (a) fails upon testing to fall within twice the prescribed limits of error; or
- (b) fails to comply with any other appropriate requirement of these Regulations:

Provided that an inspector shall not obliterate the stamp on any measure of length which falls within twice the prescribed limits of error and which was first stamped before 27th October 1986, notwithstanding that it fails to comply with the appropriate requirements of these Regulations.

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(2) Where any measure of length has, since it was last stamped, been the subject of any adjustment, alteration, addition, damage or repair which could, in the opinion of the inspector, have affected its accuracy or function, he may obliterate the stamp on that measure.

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Commencement Information

I28 Reg. 28 in force at 27.10.1986, see [reg. 1\(1\)](#)

Michael Howard
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department of Trade and Industry

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- reg. 2 amended by
- reg. 2 words omitted by [S.I. 1994/1851 Sch. Pt. 2](#)
- reg. 17(a) substituted by [S.I. 1994/1851 Sch. Pt. 2](#)
- reg. 17(c) words omitted by [S.I. 1994/1851 Sch. Pt. 2](#)
- reg. 24 substituted by [S.I. 1994/1851 Sch. Pt. 2](#)
- reg. 25 substituted by [S.I. 1996/2636 reg. 2\(3\)](#)
- reg. 25 words substituted by [S.I. 2018/1387 Sch. para. 4\(3\)](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Instrument associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Instrument (including any effects on those provisions):

- Sch. 2 inserted by [S.I. 1996/2636 Sch.](#)
- Sch. 2 para. 2 words substituted by [S.I. 1996/3020 reg. 2](#)
- reg. 17A inserted by [S.I. 1994/1851 Sch. Pt. 1](#)
- reg. 17A words inserted by [S.I. 2001/85 reg. 3\(1\)Sch.](#)
- reg. 17A words omitted by [S.I. 2009/3045 reg. 3\(2\)\(d\)](#)
- reg. 23A23B inserted by [S.I. 1996/2636 reg. 2\(2\)](#)
- reg. 23B heading words substituted by [S.I. 2018/1387 Sch. para. 4\(2\)\(a\)](#)
- reg. 23B(1) words substituted by [S.I. 2018/1387 Sch. para. 4\(2\)\(b\)](#)
- reg. 23B(2)(b) words omitted by [S.I. 2018/1387 Sch. para. 4\(2\)\(c\)](#)
- reg. 23B(3) substituted by [S.I. 2003/214 Sch. para. 3](#)