

Vacuum Glass Lifters: Verify Before the Panel Moves

Todd Jerome Jenkins | v1.0 | Reviewed October 9, 2026 | Discussion + field checks

Why this matters

A pad touching glass does not prove attachment. Surface condition, panel orientation and the actual device determine whether the crew can move the panel safely.

Objective: Verify device suitability, attachment checks and the receiving support before moving glass.

Key hazards or failure points

Vacuum loss; unsuitable glass; unintended release; panel rotation; cracked edges; crushing at landing; people beneath a load.

Practical controls

- Distinguish hand cups from a below-hook lifting device. Do not attach a hand cup to a crane or hoist unless its manufacturer specifically permits that use. Confirm panel weight, surface and orientation against the actual equipment instructions.
- Use the prescribed pad preparation, placement and inspection process. Trained users complete required vacuum, indicator, alarm and power checks. Establish any backup arrangement from the actual design; never assume a spare cup makes the system redundant.
- Prepare the route and receiving support. Keep people out of the fall and pinch paths, agree signals and safe positions, and use assessed glass-handling protection. Support and secure the panel independently before releasing attachment.

Verify It in the Field

Match device identity, configuration and capacity information to the panel and movement. Resolve coatings, moisture, damaged glass or an unfamiliar surface before attachment; appearance alone cannot establish compatibility.

Have the trained user show the applicable readiness indication and record the prescribed check result. Use the specified safe test method; do not disconnect power or defeat an alarm under a suspended panel as a demonstration.

From protected positions, check the route, waiting positions and receiving restraint. Confirm who watches attachment status and who directs a safe response to an alarm. Record equipment, instruction reference, findings, checker and time.

Stop and reassess

Hold movement for an uncertain reading, vacuum loss, damaged pad, abnormal rotation, changed weather or blocked landing. Follow the actual device's safe response. Never catch falling glass or rush the lift to beat an alarm. Correct, recheck and rebrief before restart.

Ask the crew

1. Which device is approved for this movement?
2. What proves attachment is ready?
3. What supports the panel before release?

Use the task plan and required specialist decisions before exposure.

Sources: WPG equipment guidance; HSE vacuum-lifting guidance (UK); OSHA 1926.21; actual device instructions.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/vacuum-glass-lifter-suction-device-safety