

## Scissors Lifts

Do you conduct scissors lift training just like you would for forklifts? Do you make sure contractors at your site have been properly trained to operate scissors lifts? Do you allow too many employees in the lift at one time? Are you using the scissors lift to raise materials? Please give scissors lifts the attention they deserve.

Several accidents have caused the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue a hazard alert outlining employers' obligations and preventive measures. Scissor lifts aren't just used in warehousing; they also are common in the construction, retail, entertainment and manufacturing industries, among others.

OSHA points out that over a one-year period it had investigated 10 fatalities and more than 20 other serious injuries it termed preventable involving scissor lifts. OSHA says it found that most of these injuries and fatalities were the result of employers not properly addressing fall protection, stabilization and positioning.

Remember only trained workers are allowed to use scissor lifts, and employers should make sure that those workers show that they can use a scissor lift properly. Training must at a minimum include manufacturer's instructions for operating and moving the lift, handling materials on the lift, including weight limits, and other worksite hazards workers could encounter, such as contact with electrical wires. Training must cover reporting any equipment defects or maintenance needs.

Employer obligations include making sure the equipment is properly maintained, manufacturer's instructions are followed, personal protective equipment is worn, and safe work practices are practiced.

To avoid falls, lift platforms must have guardrails, and employees should be trained to check to make sure a guardrail is in place, only stand on the work platform, never stand on the guardrails, and keep work within easy reach to avoid leaning away from the lift. Do employees have to wear fall protection on scissors lifts? No, but if the operator decides to step up on to the guardrails then fall protection would be required.

Typically, manufacturer instructions for safe movement usually rule out moving the lift in an elevated position. Select work locations with firm, level surfaces away from hazards that can cause instability, such as drop-offs, holes, slopes, bumps, ground obstructions, or debris. Use the scissor lift outside only when weather conditions are good.

OSHA cites the example of a student employee of the University of Notre Dame who was killed in 2010 while filming a football practice from a scissor lift. Untrained, he chose to raise the lift more than 39 feet, and winds gusting more than 50 miles per hour blew the lift over. Scissor lifts rated for outdoor use are generally limited to wind speeds of less than 28 miles per hour.

Positioning the scissor lift to avoid electrocution, arc flash and thermal burns is important for safely using scissor lifts near energized power lines. "Since electricity can arc or jump from the power line to the scissor lift or worker, electrocution can occur even if neither the scissor lift nor the worker touches the power line."

Although rare, the collapse of scissor lifts can be prevented if employers ensure that safety systems designed to stop collapsing are maintained and not bypassed. Never allow the weight on the work platform to exceed the manufacturer's load rating. Never allow equipment other than the scissor mechanism to be used to raise the work platform—including using a forklift to lift it.

"Scissor lifts provide a safe and reliable platform for workers to perform job tasks when used according to the manufacturer's instructions," OSHA says. "When not used properly, scissor lifts can present a serious hazard to workers. Employers are responsible for keeping workers safe."

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