# Spot The Safety Violation: 5 Scissor Lift Safety Tips



There are a few safety hazards in this picture. Can you spot them’

Improper use of scissor lifts can endanger workers. For example, in this picture from the Naval Safety Center, the worker shouldn’t be standing on the side rail of the lift. These rails aren’t intended to act as ladders. In addition, although there appears to be fall protection equipment on the scissor lift, neither worker seems to be using it. And falls from scissor lifts can be fatal.

*Example*: In New Brunswick, a carpenter died after falling approximately 12′ onto a cement floor at the construction site of a new building. He and a co-worker were using a scissor lift to install 12′ x 4′ sheets of drywall. Because the platform of the scissor lift was only 8′ long with a 3′ telescoping extension, the end guardrail was removed to accommodate the longer drywall sheets. The carpenter, who wasn’t wearing fall protection, fell from the unguarded end of the platform.

**Scissor Lift Safety Hazards**

According to the FIOSA-MIOSA Safety Alliance of BC, some common safety mistakes associated with scissor lifts are:

- Using the lift as a hoist;
- Exceeding the maximum lift capacity as stated in the operators manual;
- Climbing onto or down from the raised platform using the frame;
- Standing on the handrail or mid rail or using a ladder on the platform; and
- Parking the scissor lift on a slope exceeding operator manual specifications.

The OHS laws regulate the use of scissor lifts, typically in the requirements for elevated work platforms. For example, Sec. 156(2) of Alberta's *OHS Code 2009* requires an employer to ensure that a worker on a scissor lift or an elevating work platform with similar characteristics uses a travel restraint system. And Secs. 201-217 of Newfoundland's *OHS Regulations, 2012* spell out the requirements for use of elevating work platforms, such as scissor lifts.

## 5 Scissor Lift Safety Tips

To ensure workers safely use scissor lifts, employers should make sure that lifts are maintained as per the manufacturer's recommendations. In addition, the FIOSA-MIOSA recommends these five tips for safe use of this equipment:

**1. Worksite inspection.** Because scissor lifts should be operated only on flat, level surfaces, inspect the worksite to ensure there are no uneven surfaces, drop offs or holes, bumps, floor obstructions or debris. Also, check for overhead hazards or other work/workers in the area where the lift will be operated.

**2. Pre-shift inspection.** Before workers use a scissor lift, they should visually check the platform floor, guardrails and toe boards, and ensure the tires and wheels are in good shape. They should also check that the controls are clearly marked for function and the hydraulics aren't leaking.

**3. Function test.** Workers should test the ground controls, manual lowering control and platform controls, including emergency stops, to ensure the equipment is functioning properly. And they should check steering and drive functions.

**4. PPE.** Workers on a scissor lift should wear appropriate fall protection, such as a harness and fall arrest lanyard, as required by the OHS regulations or recommended by the operator's manual. They should also wear any other PPE required or recommended. For example, where overhead obstructions are present, they should wear hard hats.

**5. Training.** All workers who must operate a scissor lift should be trained so that they're competent to do so. That is, they must receive adequate instruction and demonstrate competency in operating the equipment. (For more information on who qualifies as a 'competent person,' see 'Compliance 101: What Makes a Worker a 'Competent Person' under OHS Laws'')

**Download this model safe work procedure for powered aerial work platforms and adapt it for your workplace, OHS program and your jurisdiction's OHS laws as they relate to such equipment.**