Spot The Safety Violation: Improv Isn’t Always Funny

What should this worker have done if this scissor lift wasn’t up to the task’

We've said it before but it obviously bears repeating: One of the most important safe work practices is to use the right tools and equipment for the job. When workers improvise, they often create unsafe situations.

This picture perfectly demonstrated how NOT to use forklifts and scissor lifts. As a general rule, forklifts shouldn't be used to lift or move people. And although they may be safely used to move or elevate materials and equipment, they shouldn't be used to raise a scissor lift in an extended position and with a worker on it!

The forklift could easily topple over in this awkward position. The scissor lift could also fall off the forklift because it doesn't appear to be secured to the forks in any way. And in either case, because the worker on the scissor lift doesn't seem to be wearing any fall protection, he would likely fall onto the pavement or into the nearby water.

The problem the worker faced was that the scissor lift couldn't lift him high enough for the job he need to do. But the appropriate solution to this dilemma was to select another piece of equipment, such as a boom truck, that would give him safe access to the area where he needed to work.

5 Scissor Lift Safety Tips

To avoid putting your workers in a position where they may have to ad lib, provide them with the appropriate equipment to safely do their jobs. And make sure they know how to safely use this equipment. For example, FIOSA-MIOSA recommends these five tips for safe use of scissor lifts:

1. **Inspect the worksite.** 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. **Inspect the equipment.** 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. **Test the equipment.** 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. **Wear proper 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 manufacturer. They should also wear any other PPE required or recommended. For example, because this worker is near water, he should be wearing a life jacket.
5. **Get appropriate 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.