Spot The Safety Violation: Is That Load Secure?

The worker in this cartoon clearly knows he’s in danger. What should’ve been done to avoid this risky situation’

Many workplaces use cranes, hoists and other lifting devices to move materials. It’s critical that the loads these devices carry are properly rigged and secured. Otherwise, the entire load or pieces of it may fall and endanger workers below or in the area.

The cartoon shows a load that hasn’t been properly secured. And if one of those containers should fall on the worker below, he’s likely to get seriously injured or even killed.

Example: A worker in Nebraska died after he was struck in the head by a piece of rebar that fell from a crane. OSHA cited the company for improper rigging of the load and failing to train workers in struck-by hazards associated with working around cranes and suspended loads.

12 RULES FOR SAFE USE OF LIFTING DEVICES

For information on the safe use of lifting devices such as cranes and hoists, see MACHINERY & EQUIPMENT: 7 Key Elements of the Lifting Device Requirements, which includes links to an overhead crane lift calculation form and a tower crane weekly and monthly inspection form.

And here are 12 basic rules for the safe use and operation of such devices:

1. Operators shouldn’t leave a lifting device unattended when a load is suspended from it.
2. Ensure that safe work procedures for work around overhead power lines are followed when there’s a risk a lifting device could come into contact with such lines. (See, ‘Electrical Safety: Take 4 Steps to Protect Workers Around Overhead Power Lines,’ May 2013, p. 1.)
3. When the movement of a load could endanger others, use tag lines, guide ropes or clamps to control it.
4. When traveling with a load, the operator should ensure it’s carried as close to the ground as possible.
5. Workers shouldn’t ride on a load, hook, rigging or bucket attached to a lifting device.
6. Make sure to implement appropriate traffic safety measures, such as signs, barricades or flaggers.
7. Ensure lifting devices have audible warning signals to alert workers to lifting operations.
8. Make sure that the wind or other weather conditions won’t impact the lifting of a load or make it hazardous, such as by causing materials to fall from it.
9. Protect the operators of lifting devices from hazards, such as falling or flying objects or material and extreme cold or heat.
10. The load must be safely landed and supported *before* it’s unhooked from the lifting device.
11. Instruct workers not to stand or walk under elevated loads unless it’s necessary and the device operator knows that they’re under the load.
12. If it’s reasonably practicable, loads *should not* pass over workers. But if doing so can’t be avoided, you may be allowed to use a lifting device to move a load over workers provided:

    - There’s no other practical alternative under the circumstances; and
    - The workers who’ll be under the load are effectively warned of the danger, such as through an audible signal.