Spot The Safety Violation: The Value of Basic Common Sense

Really’ Does this worker have a death wish’

Many workplaces’especially safety-sensitive ones’have complicated safety rules and procedures that reflect the various hazards, their complexity and the degree of danger. Although such rules and procedures may be necessary, we shouldn’t forget that good old fashioned common sense will often protect workers from many safety hazards.

This picture is a good example of a failure of basic common sense. Clearly, the scissor lift couldn’t lift the worker high enough to give him access to area he needed to reach. The appropriate solution to this problem was to use a different piece of equipment, such as a boom truck or scaffolding, that could safely elevate him to the appropriate height.

This worker shouldn’t be standing on the top rail of the scissor lift much less balancing a step ladder across the top rails and then climbing it. And to add to his errors, it doesn’t appear that the worker is wearing any fall protection, which would save him from his own folly should his jerry-rigged solution fail.

5 Scissor Lift Safety Tips

To protect your workers’both from safety hazards and from themselves’make sure they have the appropriate equipment and tools to safely do their jobs so they don’t have to improvise. And ensure they know how to safely use the equipment that you *do* provide. Here are five tips for safe use of scissor lifts, such as the one in this picture:

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, where overhead obstructions are present, they should wear hard hats.

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. (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.

Ladder Safety

And to keep workers safe when they use step and extension ladders on the job, ensure that your workplace complies with the portable ladder requirements in the OHS laws. And train workers on ladder safety to ensure that they understand:

- Step and extension ladders aren't interchangeable
- How to use step ladders
- How to inspect ladders to ensure that they're not damaged, broken or otherwise unsafe