

## January 2015 – another reminder about the safe use of telehandlers



On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014, the HSE successfully prosecuted a company under Regulation 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 after an employee was crushed between a telehandler and a steel storage container. The company had pleaded guilty and were fined £80,000 with £27,000 costs.

The incident occurred on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2012 when preparations were ongoing to lift a road saw onto a lorry. The employee was crushed and suffered severe injuries to his abdomen and was airlifted to hospital where he died 10 days later.

For more details:

<http://press.hse.gov.uk/2014/employee-died-from-crushing-injuries-at-gloucester-works-yard/>

An investigation by the HSE established that:

- The operator of the telehandler had not received proper training from a qualified instructor
- The site was found to be disorganised and chaotic
- No measures had been taken to segregate traffic from people
- No safe system of work for lifting operations had been put in place
- The telehandler was poorly maintained

If one were needed, this is a tragic but timely reminder that telehandlers must be utilised as part of a robust safety management system and a safe system of work.

Telehandlers are a flexible and versatile piece of equipment but only when their use is planned and they are operated by competent people. There is no room for complacency when a telehandler is being used.

So what does a safe system of work for the use of a telehandler comprise of? The HSE and the Construction Plant Association (CPA) provide excellent guidance but in summary some of the typical requirements that should be implemented are:

Planning:

- All operations are planned to ensure they are carried out safely
- All risks have been assessed, control measures identified and implemented
- Suitable equipment selected that is appropriate for the task and the environment
- Specific safe system of work developed
- Traffic routes, work areas and laydown areas are planned and implementation assured

Location:

- Suitable and sufficient segregation of people from traffic and moving machines / plant (inc telehandlers)

- Ground conditions should be suitable and where required, subject to checks to confirm ground bearing pressure
- Site –specific information and induction
- Exclusion zone(s) established
- The area / route assessed for oversailing electricity conductors and other hazards

Equipment:

- Equipment has been maintained in accordance with manufacturer instructions
- Where appropriate, Thorough Examinations have been carried out under LOLER 1998
- Provision of information such as manuals, lifting load charts, etc
- Machine decals are correct and clearly visible
- Equipment has been regularly inspected
- Defects are reported and managed
- Seat belts are worn at all times

Competence:

- Operators have been trained by a qualified instructor
- Competence has been confirmed regularly and recorded
- Those involved in the planning and supervision of equipment are competent
- Lifting operations are planned

This is not a comprehensive list. There is no room for complacency when using telehandlers. Learn from this tragic event (and many other similar events) to ensure suitable and sufficient planning of activities involving telehandlers and the use of competent operators and supervision.

*The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.*

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