

Safety Flash

Machines in Motion Mean Danger

A 20-year-old Notre Dame student filming a football practice died after the hydraulic scissor lift he was using toppled in powerful wind gusts. Shortly before the lift fell over, Declan Sullivan had posted Facebook messages revealing his reluctance to be working from heights in high winds. Winds were gusting at more than 50 miles per hour (80 km/h) when the lift fell over. Sullivan died shortly afterwards in a South Bend, IN, hospital.

One scissor lift manufacturer states on its website states the lifts should not be operated in winds above 25 miles per hour (40 km/h). It's not known what brand of scissor lift Sullivan had been using.

Investigators are trying to determine who gave him permission to be on the lift in such windy conditions. Wind not only makes working unpleasant because it kicks up debris and makes cold weather even more miserable—it can also contribute to fatal falls. This is particularly true if workers are carrying bulky objects such as plywood sheets, which can catch the wind, throwing workers off balance.

Share with your workers these tips for reducing their risk for injury when working in windy conditions:

- Look up! Never loiter below an unstable wall, stack of material (such as lumber) or anything that could blow over or onto you.
- Don't stand between the edge of an elevated surface and an object being carried.
- Wear fall protection and whatever specific safety gear is designed to protect workers in your field (such as gust lines for oil rig workers).
- Anticipate strong winds when stepping out of a protected area into an open one (on a boat, for instance).
- Make sure all structures you stand on or use (such as wooden steps, scaffolding and ladders) can withstand strong winds.
- Tie down any object that can become airborne, including sheets of plywood and drywall.
- Dress right for the weather. Frostbite and hypothermia will set in more quickly when it is windy.
- Ensure elevated surfaces such as catwalks and platforms have railings and toe boards to protect workers against falls.
- Examine structures covered with tarps to ensure they will remain standing in a storm. The wind can fill a tarp and cause it to pull down an unstable structure.
- Ask for help carrying objects the wind could catch and send airborne, such as plywood.
- Wear eye protection to prevent dust and debris from blowing into your eyes.

Wind, lightning and overhead hazards are just three of the many dangers associated with aerial lifts. Do our workers know under what weather conditions they should stop using a lift? Do they know what personal protective equipment they're expected to use? Be certain our employees know the hazards and how to abate them.

WYATT SAFETY DEPT.

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