

Let's Talk Equipment Safety

Using Telehandler Personnel Lifts



What went wrong?

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Mark needed to take some photos at Donny's fruit tree orchard, and he wanted a bird's eye view, from 30 feet high. Donny had a man-lift basket attached to his telehandler (extendable boom material handler) and was glad to operate the lift. Donny had gotten the lift second hand and had also gotten a used basket from an aerial lift (cherry picker) to attach to the forks of the telehandler. After taking the photos, Mark signaled Donny to lower the lift. That's when the whole thing started to tilt to the side. Then it toppled, with Donny still in the cab and Mark still in the basket. Matt suffered multiple broken bones in his arm, leg, shoulder, and hip. He spent weeks in the hospital and had multiple surgeries. **What went wrong?**

Personnel Lift Safety

Farmworkers rely on a lot of different types of equipment and a telehandler can be a useful versatile tool. It can also present hazards. Telehandlers are designed for specific purposes. Hoisting personnel may NOT be one of them. Before you consider lifting personnel, remember these tips:

- **Use a lift designed to hoist people.** Some telehandlers are designed to lift people, some aren't. Read the operator's manual or call the manufacturer's rep. if you're not sure. Always use a lift as it was designed.
- **Use the right basket.** Not all personnel baskets are created equal. If the basket didn't come new with the lift, you must get the manufacturer's written approval to use it. Match the basket to what's listed on the load plates. If the basket isn't listed, don't use it.
- **Understand your load plates.** Know the weight of your load and the attachments. Different attachments affect how the lift can be used. Then you need to know how to use the load plate information to stay within the safety limits. Exceeding those limits can cause the lift to drop the load, damage the lift, or tip-over.
- **Riders should be harnessed.** In most cases, riders in personnel hoisting equipment should be attached to the basket with a harness and lanyard. Always lower the lift to move it while a person is riding.
- **Have a ground person standing by.** If your lift is controlled from the basket, make sure someone who can operate the controls is on the ground nearby. They can assist if the rider needs help.
- **Know how to operate it.** Read the operator's manual. Follow the instructions. Contact the Manufacturer's representative for training and assistance.

Keep an eye out for these:

- Keep your lift in good condition and follow required maintenance schedules
- Don't use the lift in high winds or if lightning is possible
- Stay away from power lines, at least 50 ft.
- Don't use the lift if the ground is too soft, muddy, or slippery.
- If your equipment is rated for rough terrain, be sure to level it before starting your lift.
- Use the outriggers if you have them.
- Make sure everyone in the area is familiar with hand signals if verbal communication isn't possible.

Discussion Points

- Other than Mark, who else was affected by this incident?
- Describe a situation where you were concerned about how hoisting equipment was being used?
- How would you respond if someone pointed out that something you were doing wasn't safe?
- How would you tell an operator that you felt unsafe working around his equipment?