



## **What Goes Up Must Come Down**



*Aerial lifts and platforms are often times ill defined. In other words, the definition of "lifts and platforms" means different things to different people.*

**In the construction industry**, we literally have a never-ending series of equipment that can lift material, and people. Some lift material, some lift people.

**We also have numerous "platforms"** that are used to work off, or are a base platform for a scaffolding system.

Either way, they're dangerous, because we don't always use a lift for what it is intended, and we certainly abuse the majority of the platforms we see on a typical construction site.

**So let's get down to bare facts**, hard knowledge, and improper use by people on jobsites of both lifts and platforms.

Safety planning and practices for commonplace tasks should be as thorough as for operations with unusual hazards. Commonplace tasks make up the greater part of the daily activities of most employees and, not unexpectedly, offer more potential sources of accidents with injuries and property damage.

**Every operation or work assignment** begins with and ends with handling of materials. Thus, a majority of the incidents leading to injury, occupational illness, and property damage stem from failure to observe the principles associated with safe materials lifting and storage.

**A less obvious hazard** is potential failure of excessively used lifting equipment. The equipment used must be appropriate for the lifting or moving task. Lifting and moving devices must be operated only by personnel trained and authorized to operate them.

**Each mechanical lifting** or moving device must be inspected daily. Each lifting device must also be inspected before lifting a load that is near its rated capacity.

### **Here are some basic lifting tips:**

- Defective lifting equipment must be repaired before it is used.
- Material moving equipment must be driven forward going up a ramp, and driven backward going down a ramp.
- Traffic must not be allowed to pass under a raised load.
- The floor-loading limit must be checked before mobile lifting equipment enters an area.

- Passengers must not be carried on lifting equipment unless it is specifically equipped (rated) to carry passengers.
- A suspended load must never be left unattended, but must be lowered to the working surface and the material handling equipment secured before leaving the load unattended.
- Equipment must be on level ground, or outriggers extended, if a part of the equipment.
- Watch for overhead power lines when raising lift.
- If performing "hot work" in lift, a fire extinguisher must be in the lift station.
- Most lifts (sissor lifts, boom trucks, etc.) have a limit of one person in the lift itself. Load charts usually show personnel limits.
- All such equipment must have a load chart attached to the lift (cab, base, housing).
- Personnel operating lift must be tutored in the reading and comprehending of the applicable **Load Chart**.
- If the **Load Chart** is not affixed to the lift, the lift must not be activated.
- Debris, tools, equipment, paper, etc. should never be thrown from the lift.
- If necessary to lower tools/material/equipment to ground, such items must be lowered with an adequate safety line, capable of reaching ground level.

**Now let's talk about Platforms**, and hazards associated with these devices on the jobsite.

**OSHA defines a platform (see OSHA CFR 1926 SubPart L...Scaffolds) as:**

A work surface elevated above lower levels. Platforms can be constructed using individual wood planks, fabricated planks, fabricated decks, and fabricated platforms.

**Since platforms are usually the base** on which a worker stands to perform his work task, it is imperative that the platform base be substantially constructed, installed and maintained in perfect condition at all times.

**Unfortunately**, the platform is often covered with debris, grease, solvents, tools, materials, tripping hazards, faults, holes, gaps, etc.

**But here's what OSHA has to say** about these Platforms:

- Each platform on all working levels of scaffolds shall be fully planked or decked between the front uprights and the guardrails.
- Space between planks shall be no more than 1" wide.
- Each end of a platform (unless cleated or otherwise restrained by hooks, etc.) shall extend over the centerline of its support at least 6", or no more than 12".
- No gaps shall be permitted in any portion of a platform.
- Open sided platforms higher than four feet must be protected by standard guardrail systems (horizontal top rail at 42" height, and mid-rail at 21" height). In most cases, platforms must also have tow-board systems.

*We often times take for granted our platform systems on the jobsite. We assume that our workers are trapeze artists. They're not. They're human beings that we have to protect at all costs. Make Those Platforms Safe.*