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Aerial lifts have replaced ladders and scaffolding on many job sites due to their mobility and flexibility. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 25 construction deaths are attributed to aerial lifts each year in the United States. Making users aware of possible safety hazards and teaching them how to operate aerial lifts safely can help prevent injuries.

Top Hazards

- Falls from an elevated surface
- Tip-overs
- Falling objects striking workers below
- Structural failures/collapses
- Electric shocks
- Contact with ceilings and other overhead objects

Work Zone Inspection

Inspect the area where the aerial lift will be used for:

- Drop offs, holes or uneven ground
- Inadequate surface or support to withstand all load forces
- Bumps or floor obstructions
- Debris
- Overhead obstructions and electrical conductors
- Hazardous wind and weather conditions
- Close proximity of other workers

Equipment Inspection

Test lift controls at the beginning of each day, and inspect the lift before each use for:

- Cracked welds
- Hydraulic leaks
- Damaged control cables
- Loose wire connections
- Tire damage



Safe Work Practices

- Make sure only properly trained workers are allowed to operate aerial lifts.
- Never move the equipment with workers in an elevated platform unless permitted by the aerial lift manufacturer.
- Do not place any body part between overhead hazards and the rails of the basket (e.g., joists and beams).
- Maintain a minimum clearance of at least 10 feet from overhead power lines.
- Use a body harness or restraining belt with a lanyard attached to the boom or basket to prevent being ejected (not required for scissor lifts unless feet leave the platform).

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- Use required fall arrest to exit the basket onto another work surface (e.g., a retractable lanyard connected to a proper anchorage point).
- Do not tie off to the lift while working outside the basket.
- Always stand firmly on the floor of the basket or platform, not on guardrails.
- Do not use a ladder or any other object to gain height.
- Set the brakes and use wheel chocks when on an incline.
- Use outriggers (if provided).
- Do not exceed the load limits of the equipment, allowing for the combined weight of the worker, tools and materials.
- Do not operate lifts in high winds above those recommended by the manufacturer or in hazardous weather conditions.

For Additional Information

Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

www.osha.gov

American Work Platform Training: www.awpt.org

Training

Allow only trained and authorized workers who demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed to safely operate an aerial lift to operate one on the job.

Training should include:

- Hands-on training for employees with information specific to the lifts used
- Explanations of electrical, fall and falling object hazards
- Recognition of and avoidance techniques for unsafe conditions in the work environment
- Instructions for correct lift operation, including maximum load capacity
- Guidelines on performing inspections