Is This a Safe Way to Use a Scissor Lift?



The workers in this photo are committing at least two dangerous safety violations that any OSHA inspector would jump all over:

1. Using the side rails of the scissor lift as a ladder—can the rail support the worker's weight? I can't say for sure because I didn't read the manufacturer's operator's manual but I'll bet these workers didn't, either
2. There's fall protection equipment but nobody's using it.

The Moral: Make sure workers use scissor lifts and other elevated platforms the way OSHA requires and the manufacturer's instructions stipulate

What's at Stake

Meet Declan Sullivan



20-year-old Declan Sullivan was a sophomore at Notre Dame, a college whose football tradition are as deeply rooted as the game of college football itself. Declan had a dream job—student manager of the football team.

On a Wednesday afternoon, October 27 2010, Declan ascended a hydraulic scissor lift 20 feet off the ground to film football practice from the bird's eye vantage. The wind was whipping. The tower began to sway. Declan was swept with terror. The notes he posted on Facebook, which have just come to light, are chilling:

"Holy **** holy ***** this is terrifying."

"Gusts of winds up to 60 mph, well today will be fun at work. I guess I've lived long enough."

Inevitably, the tower came crashing down, hurtling onto a road near the practice field. Attempts were made to dig him out but Declan was gone.

There are two important facts that stand out in the investigation report:

FACT: The scissor lift that Declan was on isn't supposed to be used in winds over 40 km/hour.

FACT: At the time of the accident, the winds in South Bend, Indiana, where the Notre Dame campus is located, actually exceed 80 km/hour.

8 Common Scissor Lift Safety Pitfalls to Avoid:

Sadly, Declan Sullivan is not the only person killed needlessly in an avoidable scissor lift accident. Common mistakes resulting in scissor lift fatalities include:

1. Using scissor lifts in windy conditions—the mistake that cost Declan Sullivan his life
2. Using the scissor lift as a hoist
3. Exceeding the maximum lift capacity listed in the operator's manual

4. Using the frame to climb onto or down from the raised platform
5. Standing on the handrail or midrail—like the worker in the above photo is doing
6. Using a ladder on the platform
7. Parking the scissor lift on a slope
8. Not using fall protection when working on the scissor lift at unsafe heights (like the workers in the photo)