Spot the Safety Violation: Is This a Safe Way to Use a Scissor Lift?



What's wrong with this picture?

The workers in this photo are committing at least two dangerous safety violations that any government Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) inspector would jump all over:

First, the workers are using the side rails of the scissor lift as a ladder.

Question: Can the rail support the worker's weight?

Answer: 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.

The second problem is that there's fall protection equipment on the platform but nobody's using it.

Takeaway

The moral of this discussion, which you should share with your own trainees, is that it's imperative to ensure workers use scissor lifts and other elevated platforms the way OHS laws require and the manufacturer's instructions stipulate.

What's At Stake

To get your workers' full attention, introduce them to this handsome gentleman, named Declan Sullivan.

20-year-old Declan Sullivan was a sophomore at Notre Dame, a college whose football traditions 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, September 12, 2012, 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 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.

Two important facts from the investigation report stand out:

Fact 1: The scissor lift that Declan was on isn't supposed to be used in winds over 40 km/hour.

Fact 2: 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

Remind your workers that what happened to Declan Sullivan could just as easily happen to them. An average 20 to 25 workers are killed in scissor lift accidents each year—and that's just in the U.S. Tragically, most of these fatalities are preventable, with many occurring due to operator mistakes. Warn workers that there are eight common mistakes they need to avoid, including:

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 of the scissor lift to climb onto or down from the raised platform.
5. Standing on the handrail or midrail—like the worker in the photo we discussed above 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—again like the workers in the photo.

Parting Shot

REMEMBER THAT THIS. . .

. . . CAN LEAD TO THIS

Image sources