

Safety Flash: Incident with property damage

Incident: A qualified, experienced worker was operating a rough terrain forklift (RTFL) to lower a one-man aerial lift from the second floor. Initially the forks were too far apart. The operator lowered the boom and repositioned the forks. Following the spotters direction, he positioned the forks under the lift. The operator lifted the load slightly, tilted the carriage back and began lowering the lift. When the operator stopped lowering the boom about four feet from the ground, the lift fell sideways off the forks.



Possible contributing factors

- The spotter was a first-year apprentice and lacked experience.
- The aerial lift did not have fork pockets, but had decals indicating where to place forks.
- The load may not have been balanced due to forks possibly not being in the proper location.
- The operator asked, and was told by the rental company where to place forks when moving and lifting the aerial lift, but did not communicate this information to the spotter.
- Lowering the lift was not covered in the pre-task plan, as it was not a planned task.
- The lift needed to be moved in order for the crew to complete their assigned tasks.
- The operator could not see the fork placement due to the position of the RTFL and the aerial lift he was handling and relied on the spotter for proper fork placement.

Primary contributing factor

- The operator asked, and was told by the rental company where to place forks when moving and lifting the aerial lift, but did not communicate this information to the spotter.

Possible solutions

- Designate an experienced spotter when the operator cannot see the load
- When lifting and moving aerial lifts without fork pockets, consider securing the lift to the carriage.
- When the task changes, Stop and discuss the new task and how to safely complete the task (revise Pre-Task Plan/STAC card)

Action plan

- RLI held a site wide safety stand-down on safe moving and lifting of aerial lifts.
- All aerial lift removals from the second floor were stopped until a plan was developed and communicated.
- Experienced workers (spotters) will be used when lowering this type of lift from the second floor, and when the operator cannot see the load he is handling.
- The operator involved was retrained, and the manufacturer's recommendations for transporting the aerial lift were reviewed with all RTFL operators on site..
- Incident investigation protocol was reviewed in the weekly safety summary.

Keep improving

Your health and safety are our core value on every project. If you see a way we can support you in keeping our job sites safe, see your supervisor or contact: Jim Philo, 419/654-2043; Mark Hoffman, 419/360-9280; Rich Franklin, Michigan, 734/812-7294 or Alan Doane, Cleveland, 440/429-0639.