

FATAL ALERT

On December 06, 2012, an employee was ejected from an aerial lift and fatally injured while trying to load the aerial lift on to a trailer. According to information gathered, management directed an employee to pick up the aerial lift from the residence it had been left at and bring it back to the company yard. On the night of December 5, 2012 the weather conditions were freezing rain, cold temperatures, and frost accumulation. On the morning of the accident the employee arrived at the location to pick-up the aerial lift and parked the truck and trailer he was driving facing downhill. He unhooked the trailer from the truck and proceeded to load the aerial lift onto the trailer. The employee was having problems loading the aerial lift because the trailer was on an incline and the aerial lift's tires were spinning due to the slick conditions. The employee managed to get the aerial lift up the ramp of the trailer and onto the trailer. The aerial lift stopped momentarily. The employee tried to move the aerial lift further onto the trailer when the tires started spinning. The tires of the aerial lift developed traction and grabbed, and the aerial lift moved forward at a high rate of speed and was driven off the back end of the trailer. The employee operating the aerial lift was ejected from the aerial lift's man basket when the aerial lift hit the ground. The employee was catapulted approximately 40 feet into the air. The employee landed on the trailer and struck his head on the steel roller attached to the trailer. The employee was not wearing fall protection at the time.

Significant Findings

- The employee had approximately 3 years of experience as a truck driver.
- The employee was trained on aerial lift operations by a third party.
 - The third party did not train employees on loading aerial lifts onto trailers.
 - The employee did not receive training on how to load an aerial lift onto a trailer.
- Drivers for the company frequently have to load aerial lifts onto trailers.
- Employees/drivers are not issued their own fall protection.
 - Employees were required to borrow other employees fall protection if they needed to load an aerial lift onto a trailer or they would check out fall protection from the company services parts room.
 - The employee did not check out fall protection from the parts room or borrow protection from another employee.
- The employee parked his truck on a decline which required him to load the aerial lift in an uphill direction, which is against the manufacturer's recommendations.
- The employee was not wearing proper fall restraint while operating the aerial lift.
- The employee did not have the controls in the proper position for task being performed.
 - Controls were in rabbit and foot switch and drive speed switch was set for flat surfaces.
- Conditions were too slick for the aerial lift to drive up an incline.
 - While attempting to load an aerial lift onto a trailer the employee lost control of the aerial lift causing the aerial lift to be driven off the end of the trailer.
- The employee was ejected from the basket of the aerial lift into the air and landed on the trailer striking his head on a metal object associated with trailer.

Recommendations

- Brief all employees on the facts and circumstances of this fatal mishap.
- Train/retrain all employees to recognize related hazards in their work places.
- Only allow qualified personal to operate aerial lifts.
- Require fall protection for drivers that load aerial lifts.
- Implement a training program to address fall protection and aerial lift safety.