

Safety and health alert

14/03 Workers injured by falling granite slab

Incident

Two workers suffered foot injuries when a 2.7m x 1m slab of granite slipped from a lifting clamp while being transported by a forklift. The two workers were walking alongside the granite slab to prevent it from swinging during transport.

The clamp, which works on friction generated by the weight of the slab, was slung from a jib attached to the tynes of the forklift. The jib was long by comparison with the wheelbase of the forklift and as a result traversing slightly uneven ground caused the tip of the jib to rise and fall significantly and rapidly (a multiplier effect). In the case of the accident it is thought that uneven ground caused the jib tip and clamp to dip quickly, effectively reducing the influence of gravity and allowing the load to slip out of the clamp.

One worker was injured when struck by the falling granite slab whilst the second was less seriously injured when his foot struck the slab as he took evasive action.

Factors

Lifting clamps that rely upon gravity or the weight of the load for grip should not be used on uneven ground or in situations where the movement of the load has the potential to reduce or negate the friction (effect of gravity) required to effect the grip.

Workers being employed to stabilise or guide such loads should not be in a position to be struck by the load in the event of it slipping. Tag lines may be used in such situations.

Recommendations

The method of transport and the route for loads during transport should be assessed for suitability. The methods used should take into account the potential for the load to swing or dip.

Where heavy loads are to be transported using friction grip lifting clamps, a secondary means of support such as web slings should be employed as a back-up.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the WorkSafe internet site www.worksafe.wa.gov.au, or by contacting customer service on 1300 307 877 or email: safety@docep.wa.gov.au.

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