

Safety and health alert

02/06 Lifting containers with cranes

Incident

On 24 October 2005 a crane operator sustained major head injuries when he became caught between his truck-mounted vehicle loading crane and a container he was lifting.

The operator was called to a construction site to remove an empty sea container. The truck-mounted crane was set up and the container slung with a two-leg chain sling i.e. connected to diagonal corners.

Apparently one corner of the container would not move when the operator attempted the lift, and the free end was also restrained by a fence strut. The operator then left the controls to investigate, leaving a lifting force on the container. He moved between the container and the truck where he bent down to retrieve his ladder. It was at this moment that the free end of the container slipped over the fence strut and swung against the side of the truck crushing the operator's head.

An investigation found that one end of the container was still wired to a fence, and there was an uneven load in the container. Tests also show that any container raised with an uneven load and a two-leg sling will swing.

Factors to consider

- A two-leg sling was used;
- There was an uneven load inside the container;
- Tests show that lifting a container with a two-leg sling and an uneven load inside will cause the container to swing when raised. This swing is minimal if a four-leg sling is used;
- The operator left the controls with a lifting force on the load;
- The operator moved into the danger zone i.e. between the crane and the load; and
- The load was not free to move.

Recommendations

1. Always use a four-leg sling when lifting containers.
2. Remove the lifting force from the load when leaving the controls to investigate a problem.
3. Do not go between the crane and the load.
4. Ensure the load is free before lifting.

Further information

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

