CICA – Vic / Tas Branch
Crane Safety Bulletin
#280 January 2021

Greetings all. Today we are talking about preventing falls from cranes when working at heights.

Planning begins with seeking to eliminate the amount of time spent working at heights, yet it remains a necessary part of the job that may not be eliminated altogether.

Height safety requirements in Victorian workplaces are determined by the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017. Addressing fall risks is an important part of any SWMS and the OHS Act requires that:

- Work is carried out on the ground or a solid construction, as much as reasonably practical
- The means of entering and exiting the workplace and anything arising from the workplace are without risks to the health and safety of any person
- The person, if trained to be undertaking the work is given and uses the proper protection against the risk (such as the use of a fall prevention device, a work positions system or fall arrest system) to minimise the risk of falls

WorkSafe Victoria has produced the A Guide to Falls Prevention which provides practical guidance to persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) to comply with regulatory obligations and standards.

Additional material is available through SafeWork Australia.

Planning

As always, planning is key to understanding not only how the risk of falls will be controlled but also what to do if a fall does occur.

Planning should include:

- Minimising the time and number persons working at heights
- Ensure persons working at heights are height safety trained
- Using anchorages that are rated to AS/NZS1891.4 or equivalent
- Ensuring a compliant full body harnesses (with trauma relief straps) are used and fitted correctly
- Preventing falls with short or adjustable lanyards and minimising the distance to fall with a retractable lanyard
- Using an energy absorber that will limit shock loads to <6kN
- Having a rescue plan

Equipment

Where working at heights cannot be avoided, using 'inertial reels', a retractable lanyard with a 'seat-belt' style retraction system, allows greater freedom to work but also a short (or non-existent) fall due to the retracted lanyard length. Use the lanyard according to manufacturer's recommendations to ensure engagement.

The Double or Twin Lanyard is suitable for maintaining connection to a structure if the rigger needs to unhook a single lanyard between anchorage points.

Lanyards attached to static lines enable riggers to move along the boom. Having a compliant static line mounted as high as possible helps reduce the free fall distance significantly.

Harnesses are designed to distribute the shock load over a greater surface area of the body to minimise the damage, they are NOT designed to suspend a person for long durations. If a person is left in a harness for too long Harness Suspension Trauma, which is potentially fatal, can begin to take effect after just 3 minutes or less subject to your fitness.

If a fall occurs the rigger can use trauma straps to ease harness pressure while the rescue plan is initiated.

There are multiple websites that provide information, several courses on offer that will equip workers with the knowledge and skills to safely work at heights, and the last CICA Safety Bulletin #279 on the 'Take 5 Risk Assessment tool is also a helpful resource.

Stay focused, Take 5, and Stay Safe -CICA