



Safe Use of Aerial Lifts

Do I have to wear a body harness when I use the scissors lift?
Are teachers allowed to use the scissors lift? Are students? If not who is?
Is any training required? If so, may I take a course online?
What are the rules for using the scissors lift?

Many of our school corporations use aerial devices to perform work at elevated heights. Job tasks include replacing lights on ball fields, performing electrical work at higher elevations, installing banners, and general cleaning. These lifts can be incredibly useful in accessing elevated work areas, but they can also be extremely dangerous if operated by those without the necessary training and knowledge on their use.

First, some definitions: Articulating lifts and scissor lifts are considered aerial devices. Aerial lifts typically have a second arm that can extend both horizontally and vertically, whereas scissor lifts travel only on a vertical plane. OSHA regulates use of aerial lifts under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1926.453 and 1926.454, while scissor lifts, classified by OSHA as mobile scaffolds, are regulated under other OSHA standards. Yes, it is confusing!

Here are some of the basics; Body-harness fall protection is always required in aerial lifts due to the “catapulting” feature of these lifts (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcJQOWLxjFc>). Body-harness fall protection equipment is typically not required on scissor lifts since scissor lifts have guardrails and mid-rails that effectively protect operators. At no time should operators stand on mid-rails, sit on the guardrail, or crawl outside the guardrail system.

Federal OSHA standards mandate that aerial and scissor lift operators be trained and certified every three years. Federal law prohibits use of aerial devices by untrained and uncertified personnel. Online courses do not meet the requirements of the OSHA Standard since both classroom training and hands-on performance testing is required. Operators are required to be trained on the specific lift they will be using.

Classroom training involves identifying and understanding the nature of lift hazards, electrical hazards, fall hazards and falling object hazards when working with lifts. Training also discusses the correct procedures for moving, operating, repairing, inspecting and maintaining the lift. Hands-on performance testing is a written assessment evaluating operator skills in inspecting and operating the lift.

Here are some of the basic rules when using aerial devices:

- 1) Daily, written inspections are required of all lifts prior to use. Inspection requirements are in the operations manual located on the lift; keep multiple copies on the lift for use;



- 2) Never operate a scissor lift alone. OSHA requires a "spotter" to keep people away from the lift during use and to assist when traveling from one location to another;
- 3) Hardhats are required by the lift operator and the spotter.

Retraining is required within the three years if there are changes in work site hazards, changes in the lift type, or if employees demonstrate that they have not retained the requisite proficiency in using the lift.

Approximately forty people die annually when using aerial devices and hundreds are injured. Seventy-five percent of scissor lifts tip-overs result in death. Tip-overs typically occur when wheels run off the edge of a ramp or sidewalk or when the lift runs over debris on the floor. Twenty percent of fatalities involved a fall when the operator was ejected after the scissor lift was struck by an object (another reason for a "spotter"). Other deaths followed the removal of chains or guardrails, or while standing on or leaning over railings.

Aerial device certification training is available through the ISESC Worker's Compensation Risk Management Group. Your loss prevention services provider, Mike Reed of Reed Environmental, Inc., is available to provide this training. Classroom training is typically a couple of hours, followed by another hour or so for the hands-on evaluation of each participant.