

SAFETY ALERT

August 2023

Type of incident: Crane truck driver / operator flung from their seat while loading.



What happened:

The crane truck arrived at a vacated logging site.

The instruction was to uplift Eucalyptus firewood logs.

Several loads had previously been uplifted from the

same location without any problems. The logs were located over a fence adjacent to an access track.

The truck driver / crane operator positioned his truck as close as practicable to the logs, extending the stabiliser legs, then climbed to the elevated seat as normal.

Once in position, the operator extended the grapple to near full reach for the first heave. When lifting the log (which happened to be of large piece size), a stabiliser leg suddenly sunk into the ground without warning, tilting the truck violently. The operator was thrown from his seat, hit the boom and eventually landed on the ground. He was knocked unconscious, suffered head injuries and extensive bruising.

Lessons learned:

- Ensure stabiliser legs are positioned on flat / solid ground.
- **Use portable stabiliser pads if the ground is soft.** These are available in various sizes.
- Fit a seatbelt (belt, assembly and attachment point require certification) for crane truck operator use.
- Crane truck operators should wear 'fit for purpose' head protection (not a forestry hard hat) i.e., to EN12492 standard – multi directional protection. It exceeds the AS/NZS 1801:1997 (ACOP) if falling from height.
- Ensure logs / material are presented and positioned that allows a crane to uplift safely.
- Ensure 'working alone' procedures are in place.

Ongoing monitoring of the Crane Truck process:

- *Ensure logs that require uplift by a crane truck are presented and or made available in a position that facilitates safe retrieval and loading. The same applies to a potential 'drop off' location for a crane truck.*
- *Crane truck operators must ensure they operate within the manufacturer's specification in relation to the lifting capacity matrix.*
- *When setting up the crane for retrieval / drop off, ensure:*
 - *An effective braking system **is engaged** on the truck before loading / unloading.*
 - *The stabiliser legs are fully extended **and** locked in position before climbing.*
 - *Use three points of contact when climbing and dismounting.*
 - *All steps and handholds are in good condition.*
 - *Check the seat safety pin is locked before climbing into the seat.*
 - *Use a seat belt.*
- *If loading a truck and trailer, load the truck first to provide some stability.*
- *Ensure slow, careful use of controls to prevent boom swing and logs hitting stanchions.*