

TITLE: Equipment Failure – 8 tonne 360° JCB Excavator

What Happened?

On the 11th July 2011, a Boom RAM on an 8 tonne 360° JCB excavator cracked and buckled during a lifting operation when offloading shuttering from a flat bed truck. The machine was virtually new with 70 hours recorded use.



Thankfully the operator of the excavator had lowered the load to the ground when the failure was identified and the machine immediately quarantined. However, if the boom had completely failed and the load dropped during the lift, this could have resulted in far more serious incident.

Safe Working – A Reminder

Regulation 8 of LOLER requires lifting operations to be properly planned, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner.

The risk assessment must address the need to segregate the lifting operation from other persons on site. Based on this risk assessment, a written method statement setting out the safe operating procedure to be followed should be prepared and communicated to all personnel involved in the lifting operation. Exclusion zones must be clearly defined.

The supervisor should ensure that persons are kept well away from the lifting area, and in particular that there is no one working below the lift, for example in a trench. Excavator operators must never move the machine or load until they have satisfied themselves that the slinger/signaler and any other persons associated with the lift have all moved away from the danger area, to a position of safety.

Ensure key checks are carried out on the machine and all lifting accessories. Ensure acoustics/visual warning devices are switched on. Check competency of operators and supervisors. Ensure pre-start checks are carried out and that the machine is maintained and tested.

Remember, excavators are designed for rapid earth moving and are not designed for lifting operations as their principle function. When planning a lifting operation, you should firstly consider whether an excavator is the most appropriate machine, taking into account the type of lift and the duration of the task.

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